

STAT

I Worked in the Soviet

by Ragnor Rudfalk

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Swedish book, 1951

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RAGNAR RUDFALK



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WE WANTED TO FIGHT FOR THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM

In 1940 the war spread to Scandinavia. Denmark and Norway were occupied by the Nazi invaders. Even for Sweden a period of trial began, although we were neutral. The Norwegian occupation was like a blow between the eyes and many wondered what would follow. Would it be our turn next or would our neutrality be respected? These were days filled with anguish and worries. Everyone felt fear and hatred of the pillaging of the Nazi troops and the devastation caused by them and grief over the Norwegian people's tragic fate. German military personnel on leave were granted transit passage through Sweden. Stoning of the German leave trains in the stations was not an infrequent occurrence and an atmosphere of hostility, against the German soldiers prevailed. All this was a natural reaction. As far as most people were concerned, it stopped at that -- perhaps a fortunate thing in this situation. But many experienced stronger feelings for the Norwegians and their struggle, especially the population of the border regions. Through the veins of many of these people, who many times daily came into contact with the Norwegian people ran Norwegian blood. For such people no border in the ordinary sense existed between the two countries, and it was, of course, natural that it would be they who first offered help when the stream of refugees from the west flowed in across our borders; many also crossed over and participated actively in the battles against the invader.

I was born and raised in Jämtland and early came into contact with the Norwegians at various employment places in the border area and during cycling tours in Norway. For my part these contacts

developed into a warm friendship for Norway and its people. Furthermore, Jamtland's relations with the Norwegian people are based on old blood ties, for in days of old Jamtland belonged to Norway and even today phrases and expressions can be found in the speech of Jamtlanders which are purely Norwegian. It is for these reasons that we in Jamtland experience a feeling of affinity with the Norwegian people in an entirely different manner than do people in the rest of Sweden.

Long before the outbreak of war in 1939 Nazism had at an early stage shown its true face. The spreading mass terror, the reports from concentration camps and all their awful atrocities, all the human suffering which swept over one country after another as the German barbarism pushed victoriously on -- all this greatly upset me. When Norway became occupied I immediately made up my mind that I would sign up for active participation in the fight against the occupation forces in Norway. I got in touch with the Norwegian legation in Stockholm. The legation informed me that it was not in a position to recruit in Sweden a corps of volunteers for Norway. Shortly thereafter I received word from a Norwegian lieutenant who came to Sweden for the purpose of illegally signing up volunteers. Through him I thus enlisted in a corps of volunteers who were to cross the border and give assistance to the fighting Norwegians when the appropriate moment presented itself. By this time, furthermore, relief forces of the Western powers had arrived in Norway and everything seemed for a moment more hopeful. The last message I received from the Norwegian lieutenant advised me to remain prepared and to await further orders. Then came the news of the withdrawal of the West's relief forces and the cessation of

Norwegian resistance at most points; with that, the plans for a Swedish volunteer corps crumbled.

[Caption on obverse of unnumbered plate between pages 8 and 9]

The Author's Itinerary

[Caption on reverse of unnumbered plate between pages 8 and 9]

Pages in the Author's Unique Passport Issued by the Swedish Legation in Moscow.

During the next few years I worked in various industries in Southern Sweden but remained in touch with Norwegian refugees who had fled to Sweden. The thought of joining the "free Norwegian forces" and of being able to make my contribution to the fight against the Nazis had never left me, and this thought gained new strength when, in the early part of 1943, I received an offer to work as instructor in a lumbercamp in the village of Hammerdal in Jamtland. Inasmuch as the participants were Norwegian refugees I accepted the position and began my work. The majority of the participants were boys between 18 and 25 years of age who represented Norway from North to South.

At the end of each workday one of their favorite pastimes was to turn on the short-wave receiving set and tune in on the Norwegian broadcast from England. All were very anxious and desirous of getting over there and of being permitted to take an active part in the fight for liberation, but the chances were small and the obstacles numerous. One evening the Norwegian newscast

mentioned that a few Norwegians had successfully reached England from Sweden, by way of Finland and Russia, on board one of the English freighters carrying weapons and provisions to Russia. Perhaps there was a possibility...

I became interested, myself, and we discussed the matter a good deal, weighing the risks involved in following the route taken by these Norwegians. During the following weeks we studied maps of Finland and the Murmansk area, made plans and discussed the matter. I pronounced myself willing to go along if the plan materialized. Finally, however, the majority considered the undertaking too risky and the matter was buried. But I was unable to completely shake off the thought of getting "over" via Finland and Murmansk.

Toward midsummer we broke camp and the Norwegians were placed on farms and in business enterprises in the area. I myself took an instructor's job up in Lillvik just North of Stromsund.

One of the first days up there I went down to the community in the evening and there made the acquaintance of a Norwegian who was employed as a wood cutter by one of the local farmers. He lived in a little cabin on the other side of the lake, and I accompanied him there and ~~spent the night~~.....

He was a little over twenty years old, his name was Odd Willassen and he came from Tromso. Willassen was a seaman and had been sailing on a Norwegian freighter when the war struck Norway. Early in the occupation period he was impressed into service on board a ship carrying sulphur-ore to Germany. The crew consisted of Norwegians exclusively, but Germans kept guard on board.

Sometime in 1941 the freighter was en route to Germany. Off the coast of Sweden, it sailed just inside the territorial waterline to avoid the mines. Swedish coastal patrol boats headed out toward it, but shortly before some ten Norwegians had seized this opportunity to jump overboard. The German guards attempted to stop the fugitives, but the latter were picked up by the Swedish boats and brought to the coast of Bohuslan.

Odd had landed up here and kept busy with various sorts of forestry work. We sat for a long while talking and when he discovered that I was interested in joining the Norwegian forces he wanted us to attempt the journey together by way of Finland and Murmansk. I immediately agreed to it.

In the following days we began seriously to plan for our trip. I made arrangements with the provincial employment board to terminate my position, some equipment was secured, and on 14 July 1943 we were set to leave.

It should be pointed out that at this period it was difficult to get over to "Little Norway" in Canada by other routes. Swedish shipping had almost come to a halt due to the threat of mines. The only possibility consisted of attempting to get through Finland to Russia and there to board an English ship. We even counted on assistance from the Russians. After all, they and the Western powers were allied against the common enemy.

We had at last, come so far that we could board the train in Strömsund, my Norwegian friend and I, to begin our journey to Murmansk and, as we hoped, England, Canada, and the free Norwegian forces.

The date was the 15th of July 1943, a delightful summer's day with a brilliant sun and a clear blue sky. We had carefully planned our journey and believed that we had made all the necessary preparation. We said little to one another as we settled in a third-class compartment with our rucksacks. I suppose both of us were a bit nervous, and I felt especially strange at leaving that part of the country where I had grown up. I had mentioned nothing to anyone, not even to my parents, and neither had Odd. We felt it would be best that way. We intended to write and explain our plans when we reached the Finnish border.

As usual, the train was packed with people, people who were going away to spend their vacations and servicemen on leave. No one paid any particular attention to us and we tried to stay by ourselves as much as possible. I feared a little for Odd, for Norwegians were not permitted in the areas through which we were to travel, so I told him to talk as little as possible in order that no one should notice his Norwegian accent. As usual, we wore riding-breeches and rubber boots. We carried canned food in our rucksacks and we had also brought a blanket with us.

The train took us first up to Hoting and then down to Langsele, where we boarded the Noorland express. From there the journey continued past Boden and up to Gallivare, from which point we were to continue by bus.

Never before had Sweden seemed as beautiful as then. I really felt a pang in my heart when we rode along the Angerman River. Wild, foaming rapids, filled with lively dancing logs, high, steep river-banks, and pretty, smiling villages, framed by tremendous dark

woods, rapidly unfolded and interchanged before our eyes.

How beautiful! It was really difficult to leave all this. One did not know, of course, when one would be back, for, naturally, we were bound to succeed. If we could only reach Russia without losing our skins, we would surely obtain all the assistance we needed, for, after all, the Russians and the English were companions in arms, and consequently, also our friends. Those, approximately, were our thoughts, as we sat in the train and saw the summer countryside roll by.

During the trip between Langsele and Roden I started chatting with a couple of lads. As we were standing in the aisle talking two well-dressed men walked by. One of them nodded recognition to my temporary travel companions. After they had passed, one of the boys said:

"It sure would be nice to have as interesting a job as those two have."

"Oh! What sort of work do they do?" I replied.

"They are detectives. They have just been down to Solleftea with a couple of Norwegians they caught up in Gallivare last week."

I had butterflies in my stomach.. The words "detectives", "Norwegians", "restricted areas" rang in my ears. We, too, had to pass through Gallivare and Odd was there in the compartment. Perhaps...

I began feeling a bit worried; caution was now essential. It would certainly be a shame if our undertaking were to come to an end now that we had come so far, but as long as Odd slept everything

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I began feeling a bit worried; caution was now essential. It would certainly be a shame if our undertaking were to come to an end now that we had come so far, but as long as Odd slept everything

was alright. At that moment the conductor called out:

"Next stop, Boden!"

In Boden we made connections for Gallivare. We marked our seats in the compartment and then went out onto the platform to have a smoke. The policemen were there, too. Then, they got on the train, entered our compartment... I followed at a run, carried out our rucksacks and jumped off the train just as it began moving. We had managed this time and the next train was leaving in a few hours.

We did not reach Gallivare until late in the evening. The weather had changed; it rained fiercely and we were unable to find a room for the night. All tourist homes and boarding-houses were booked up. We slipped into a cafe to get something to eat and to write a few letters. I wrote to my parents and told them that I intended to make my way to Murmansk and then, eventually, by way of England, to join the free Norwegian fighting forces. Our correspondence completed, we stayed there and rested until the waitress came and told us we would have to leave as the cafe was closing for the evening. It was still raining just as violently as before.

"But we cannot roam about all night in this unchristian weather; so you must find a room for us," I argued.

The girl really did obtain a room for us so that we could get fully rested. We were indeed going to need all our strength for the march through Finland. We were aware of the fact that it would be difficult.

The following morning we arose early and rode to Pajala. From there, we would have to take a bus which travelled along the border

up to Muodoslompo. Shortly before we reached Pajala, however, we seemed to be headed for trouble. A military road-block stopped us, and Odd and I both realized that we would be lost if the guards asked to see our papers. But we were in luck, they were looking for someone whom they immediately found, and we were permitted to drive on. From Muodoslompo we continued our journey by touring car and approaching the border, came to a small farm situated there all by itself. We did not dare approach as long as the inhabitants were awake, for we intended to "borrow" their boat which lay tied to the bank of the river. While we waited we stretched out behind some bushes and chatted. We had not known each other very long and had a great deal to talk about. I spoke a little of the village back home and Odd talked about a girl he met in Stromsund a short time before.

Later that night we stole down to the river untied the boat and rowed out. Everything went well. No guards were posted on the Swedish side; as for the Finnish side, we knew nothing about it. Fortunately, we found it, too, completely deserted. We now began our march, not in enemy country but in a country filled with enemies. We possessed a map and a compass and set out from a northeast course, aiming for the Pallas mountains. At this point we began to think that everything was quite exciting. So far everything had gone well, we believed we had plenty of provisions and cigarettes and the future seemed bright. We were, however, well aware that we must be cautious during our march through Finland in order not to run in to any German sentries. Consequently, we walked at night and slept during the days. The weather remained good all along, but the mosquitoes gave us no peace. I have never seen so many mosquitoes

at one time, and that in spite of the fact that I was accustomed to the far from mosquito-free summers in Jamtland. But for the various tinctures we used, the grey bloodsuckers would surely have done us in.

We found the going easy to begin with but soon came to rocky and rugged terrain. We now began climbing the Pallas Mountains. So far, all had gone well, we had seen no one except at a safe distance and perhaps for this reason we may have become somewhat nonchalant and careless. We walked along chatting and joking and were not too attentive to what we were doing. Then, suddenly, as we had almost reached the top of the mountain-chain, we heard someone call out in German. Several soldiers appeared on the crest some 50 meters in front of us. We had been discovered by the German military sentries who were posted up there on the mountain. Talk about two minds and one thought! As though obeying one order we made an about-face and started running back down the slope for dear life, looking for cover behind the bushy growth and the numerous large rocks. The Germans fired several shots after us which fortunately missed, but it was uncomfortable to be running and to serve as a living target for them.

We clearly understood that we would be unable to keep running very long with our heavy packs, and, on the other hand, we had no desire to throw them away. Suddenly we ran straight upon a cave -- as a matter of fact, it was no more than a depression under a stone-block -- and hid there. We lay there against the back of the cave for 3 or 4 hours, and on one occasion the German soldiers passed just ten meters away from us. We carried no weapons,

for we had taken into consideration the possibility that we would be taken prisoners and would then stand a better chance of getting out of it if we were unarmed.

"Say," Odd whispered suddenly, "it is just as well that we return to Sweden now. We'll never be able to get through Finland on account of the Germans and things will get more difficult the closer we come to the Russian border."

I felt, however, that that would be too pitiful an end. Since we had finally started out we must certainly reach Russia and, once there, we would be given all the help we needed -- or so we thought as we lay hiding from the Germans in the Pallas Mountains.

After a while, all became quiet. Apparently the guards had tired of looking for us, and we crept carefully out of the cave. We made a long detour and succeeded in passing over the mountain ridges without further incident. Our march then continued toward the Northeast.

Entire days now passed without our seeing a soul. The only living beings we encountered were stray reindeer here and there -- and the mosquitos, of course. On the other hand, the worst of it was that our food and tobacco began running short at an alarming rate. The march was strenuous, and we felt hungry all the time and ate more than we had counted on.

Late one evening in the early part of our march we reached a wide river which we had to cross. Crossing at that point would

have proved too troublesome, so we decided to follow it a while and see if we could not find a narrower spot where we would be able to swim across. After a short time we came upon a fence on the other side of which cultivated ground extended. We began stealing carefully forward along the edge of the wood and there, before us, down by the river-bank stood a few grey houses surrounded by some tall birches. An idyllic little enclosure in the midst of wilderness.

What were we to do now? We sat down and began discussing the matter; should we wait until the people on the farm had fallen asleep and then "borrow" their boat and row across the river, or should we continue along the river and look for an appropriate place to swim across?

"Supposing we go down to the farm and attempt to buy some food from the people; for you know we do not have much left in our rucksacks and we still have far to march."

This daring idea came from Odd.

Yes, maybe; but suppose there are German soldiers there. That would be the end of us. However, the thought of a cooked meal, of being able to sit at a prepared table and fully satisfy one's hunger was tempting, and there was nothing to ~~show that there~~ were German soldiers present on the farm. Except for a few small children playing in the yard, all was calm and quiet.

We decided to make an attempt, come what may. Our decision reached, we put on our rucksacks and with determined steps approached

the small farm. Upon seeing us, the children quickly fled into the farmhouse, a couple of dogs tied to one of the outbuildings barked furiously, and we were aware of being, at that moment, the cynosure of all the eyes on the farm. A cat, warming itself in the last rays of sun on the front stoop, fled frightened into a hole in the foundation as we turned into the yard.

We removed our rucksacks at the entrance and stepped into the hall. A voice inside the house replied to my knocks and we walked in. At the table sat the farm owner, a short squarely-built middle-aged man; his wife, standing by the stove was busy preparing food and right against her the children whom we had seen playing had taken refuge. In addition, two other children were present in the room, two boys in the age of 14 or 15. That was the whole family.

We greeted them and the farmer greeted us in turn, pointing to the sofa on which he bade us sit down. We began by telling the farmer that we were hungry and wanted to buy some food. The farmer raised no objection. While his wife fixed the evening meal, I began explaining to him who we were and where we were headed and he listened attentively. He stated that he had lost two sons during the winter war against the Russians. He also talked about the pillaging of the Germans, mentioned that the Germans were disliked by the Finnish population, as were the Russians. His farm was situated approximately 30 kilometers from the Petsamo road where German military camps were located and about which he warned us. On our map he marked the route we ought to follow in order to avoid these camps as much as possible.

After we had eaten we took out some coffee and sugar that we had in our packs and gave it to them. Overjoyed by this, the old peasant woman fetched several large loaves of bread, which we accepted for travel provision. I still possessed 10 to 15 Swedish crowns in silver and we handed these over in payment for our food. The farmer invited us to stay overnight, but, as we were anxious to be on our way, we declined with thanks and instead asked the farmer to row us across the river. To this he agreed. We expressed our thanks, picked up our packs and then followed the farmer down to the river.

Our march now continued at a fast pace all night, and in the morning we arrived at the Petsamo road. Prior to reaching this point, as we passed a high hill we saw a large group of barracks to our right, one of those German camps about which the farmer had spoken. The advice for us to be cautious here appeared to be well justified, for up by the road passed a steady stream of German soldiers, tanks, guns and transport vehicles. We were forced to lie in wait a long while for an opportunity to dash across. Shortly after we had passed the Petsamo road we ran straight into an army barrack, well camouflaged in the woods, but fortunately we sighted no soldiers. We continued well into the night before making camp to sleep. We wanted to get as far away as possible from the danger zone.

The remaining portion of the march through Finland proved to be the most troublesome. Extensive mountain ridges with rocky and rugged terrain broken by glens and wide, swampy marches; but worst of all were the river crossings which became more and more

numerous the closer we came to the Russian border. We were finally forced to construct, with the help of a small ax, a raft to transport our clothes and rucksacks.

One day we came upon a particularly turbulent river not far from the border. As usual we made a raft to push ahead of us while swimming. About halfway out in the river we ran into a violent whirlpool. The raft struck a rock and spun around and in the same instant I heard Odd yell out and, throwing a glance at him, saw one of our rucksacks slip off the raft and be quickly dragged away by the current. To get ourselves across required all our efforts and there was no possibility of recovering the lost rucksack.

A while later, as we sat and rested on the bank, Odd said in a serious tone:

"You know, all our papers were in that rucksack. Now we have nothing with which to identify ourselves. How do you think we shall manage now?"

I did not give the matter much thought. I did not believe it was too serious. The Russians would surely receive us in a friendly manner even without identification papers, and so we marched on toward the border. In the forenoon of the 29th of July we arrived there at last, and we had by that time covered at least 500 kilometers of rugged terrain. We had exhausted our food supply and it gave us a comfortable feeling to be able to leave Finland behind us. There we had been forced to sneak about at night. The next step would be to make contact with people, and we could now walk openly and without fearing anything.

ACROSS THE FINNO-RUSSIAN BORDER

There was nothing extraordinary about going across the Finno-Russian border. Approximately 100 meters before it we came to a high barrier of brushwood; but there were no other markers or sign posts, nor did we see any sentries. We wanted to meet people as soon as possible now, for we were hungry and hoped to find food. We would soon reach our goal, Murmansk and an English ship.

We climbed a hill and from there could see, far away on the horizon, something which we presumed to be a village; the march to it was a long one. Darkness suddenly began to fall and only flashes of lightning, crossing each other, now and then illuminated the countryside. A thunderstorm was heading our way and it started to rain. Darkness deepened more and more, and in the darkness we rested in a large swamp, where time and again we sank to our waist into the mud. We finally managed to get through and down to a river. We could make out the vague outlines of numerous houses on the other side. We were too tired and wet to bother removing our clothes and simply waded into the river and swam across. Upon reaching the other side we discovered that it was a military camp, but no soldiers were in sight. We crept through ~~the barbed wire and entered one of the barracks.~~ Everything within was in complete disorder; mattresses, pieces of clothing and broken rifles littered the floor. Everything indicated that the Russians here had been in a hurry to reach safety.

We had but one thought in mind, to get hold of food.

But that item was scarcely to be found. We finally did find a small bag of flour of which we made soup and discovered that it was dried and ground carrots. All the same, it was better than nothing.

We stayed there overnight and continued our march the following day to find a community and people without delay. We followed a telephone line running from the abandoned camp. Undoubtedly it would sooner or later lead to inhabited areas. But the march proved to be a long one, and, tired and hungry as we were, it didn't go very fast. Time and again we had to stop and quiet the worst of our hunger with whatever berries we were able to find. On the 1st of August, after two days of marching from the barracks camp, we reached the great Tuloma River. The telephone line we had followed crossed the river, which was entirely too turbulent and wide to chance a crossing. Instead, we decided to follow the river. We had travelled quite far when our path met a smaller river which flowed into the Tuloma. We were faced with the necessity of crossing the one or the other.

Suddenly, as we stood there figuring out what we should do, the sound of oars came from farther down the river. We began shouting and yelling and after a while a small rowboat appeared from behind a point of land. We waved with the small Swedish and Norwegian flags that we had brought with us. We saw the boat set course for us. Five soldiers occupied it and they signalled us to climb aboard. We obeyed, of course, and then

travelled down the river a good distance. The barking of a machine-gun and the reports of a few scattered shots could be heard from a distance and made us understand that the front was not very far away. The soldiers took the boat into land and we stepped ashore after they had made sure that we were not armed. They talked amongst each other, in Russian, of course, so Odd and I were unable to understand a word.

We stood and waited, wondering what would happen next. A soldier then came up to us with blindfolds and tied them securely over our eyes without saying a word, and we were then made to walk into the forest. Later we felt that we were descending underground, down into some sort of trench.

Odd then whispered to me half jokingly:

"I wonder how this will end. Do you think they intend to shoot us?"

Unconsciously we were standing in strict attention, Odd and I, with blindfolds over our eyes, unable to see anything. Talk in Russian went on all around us. We understood nothing and knew not what was to come. Naturally we were uneasy. Finally a soldier removed our blindfolds and a lieutenant began questioning us in broken German. Personally I understood nothing but Odd knew a few words of German. The lieutenant was a decent sort, seemed friendly and helpful, offered us cigarettes and saw to it that we received some food. After that we were allowed to rest a few hours before being led further on along the river. We had

been searched, of course, but only for the sake of formality, it seemed, and we were permitted to keep all our belongings after the lieutenant had made a list of them.

We walked all night in a northerly direction and in the morning arrived at what we understood to be the headquarters. Here a captain took over the interrogation. He tried to speak to us in English but did as badly as the lieutenant had in German. He made a note of the names of our families, our hometown, etc., and wanted to know why we wished to go to England. Generally speaking, however, he did not seem to be interested in either us or our plans. Once more we were permitted to rest a while, then we were escorted down to the river and made to climb aboard a large army motor-launch. We were happy, for we realized that we would be travelling in the direction of Murmansk. We went ashore at a little town ten kilometers South of Murmansk, and for the first time, on the 5th of August, were confronted with a cell; fortunately, we were allowed to share it. We had once more been searched and now became somewhat suspicious. We felt with uncomfortable certainty that we no longer were free.

The following morning an interpreter came to our cell. He wore civilian clothes, but we found out later that he belonged to the NKVD (an organization corresponding to the German Gestapo). ~~He spoke Norwegian~~ fluently and explained that he was born of Norwegian parents in Murmansk. He had never been in Norway himself, he said, but after we had talked to him Odd was convinced that he lied, for he was familiar with a great number of details

about conditions in Norway, of which he could have known nothing unless he had been in Norway. He immediately assumed a friendly tone, questioned us on our personal circumstances and wanted to know the details about the march through Finland. He did not seem to question the veracity of the information we gave him, and we interrogated him on the possibilities of getting over to England.

He thought that we would surely receive help in carrying out our plan, but, of course, he was not the one to decide, he had his superiors. Then he said good-bye, wished us good luck and left the cell. And Odd and I remained there, thinking that the interrogation had ended. That is how little we knew then about Russia!

In the evening two guards came for us. They led us a few kilometers outside of town and into the woods to a military camp. Together with our guards we climbed onto a truck and off we drove toward Murmansk. Things were friendly enough on the floor of the truck. The guards offered us cigarettes, and at about 4 o'clock in the morning we arrived at Murmansk, the location of the headquarters of the NKVD for that district. We were immediately taken there and understood that we were to see one of the higher officials. A long waiting period followed, however. We stood around in the corridor under guard until two o'clock in the afternoon, when an NKVD officer arrived and told the guards that he would take us in charge. He made a sign for us to follow him and we proceeded through town.

Murmansk, a medium-sized city, Russia's most important northern port, presented a dismal picture to our eyes. The Germans had done everything in their power to get possession of this strategically important point but had failed. Their explosive and incendiary bombs had, however, performed an intensive work of destruction. Everything stood in ruins. Only one street, the one which ran straight through the town, had been cleared sufficiently to allow one to get through by car. All the others had been blown up and were filled with miscellaneous rubble. Nowhere could one find an undamaged building. Entire blocks were burned down, stone houses were severed in the middle as though they had been cut off with a sharp knife. Iron beds could be seen hanging halfway through the gaping walls.

And the people -- tattered, dirty, pathetic beggars sitting on their bundles in what used to be street corners, stretching out their hands to beg a piece of bread of those of their fellowmen who, though just as tattered, dirty and pathetic, were not begging. Patrols of soldiers marched by shoving groups of unfortunate prisoners before them.

The faces of officers and higher officials which did not display any evidence of want and tragedy, their fancy uniforms covered with medals and their highly polished boots -- all this presented a picture which was not pleasant to contemplate. It gave us forebodings which later were confirmed only too adequately.

We were taken to the officers' quarters where our guard put teawater on and brought out bread so that we might eat and thereafter sleep. He returned in the evening with the Norwegian-speaking interpreter whom we believed we had seen for the last time. Naturally we wondered what was to happen. The interpreter shrugged his shoulders; he knew nothing. We were just to follow him. A truck waited outside the house. We climbed into it and rode north about 5 kilometers outside Murmansk where we came to a whole village of barracks, surrounded by multiple rows of barbed-wire fencing and a spear-shaped palisade. The truck came to a stop there and we were unceremoniously shoved in, by the guards who met us.

We were ordered to undress and the guards thoroughly examined everything we possessed. We had to surrender most of it, our watches among other things, and were given a receipt in exchange. Then we were locked up in a cell, this time a real cell with bars in front of the little window, blank walls and a sloping shelf as the only seat and bunk. The room contained no toilet facilities; in the door was a small slot which, of course, could be opened only from the outside to enable the guards to look in. We had to knock on the slot if we needed to leave the cell.

In the evening (this was the 7th of August) some bread was brought to us, but we had to ~~get~~ along without bedclothes. Nevertheless we slept well on the wooden boards, tired as we were; but we regretted that we did not wear heavier clothes, for already one noticed the approach of fall in this area. It was raw, cold and rainy and we felt rather out of sorts.

Towards the evening of the following day, the interpreter returned for us. We were shown to the interrogation room this time and found ourselves in the presence of the camp's commanding officer, who seemed thoroughly impersonal. He did not question us but simply informed us, through the intermediary of the interpreter, that we would have to reconcile ourselves to a few days of imprisonment, for, after all, we had crossed the border illegally, and making arrangements for us would require a little time. He then asked whether we had any complaints. We asked for bedclothes and a bit more food. They would do what they could. We were taken from the room, but in the evening a guard brought us a mattress and two blankets. Later, we received some dried bread and tobacco.

Thus 3 or 4 days passed without anything happening. We sat and talked and Odd told about some Norwegian fisherman who had drifted into Russian waters and had run into difficulties trying to return home. We did not hold too bright an outlook on the situation, but we did not feel particularly worried.

One evening a guard entered the cell and signalled to Odd to follow him. He returned after approximately two hours, but we had no time to talk to one another for I was immediately ~~called into the interrogation room.~~ A woman captain and four higher officers sat in the room. The captain, who spoke perfect Norwegian, conducted the interrogation. She was very friendly, offered me a cigarette, and wanted to know all about our journey. Suddenly she said:

"Are you familiar with the fortress at Boden?"

"Yes, but no more than by name".

"Which branches of the armed forces are stationed there?"

"I do not know, and even if I knew I would not talk about it. Such things are military secrets."

While she did not become aggressive, she did dwell stubbornly on the subject of travel by Swedish railways. She wanted to know whether or not any sizable military forces were located up by the border, what sort of troops, etc. I explained that these were questions to which I could not answer, whereupon she engaged in a lengthy conversation with the higher officer who supervised the interrogation. She then gave me several sheets of paper and told me to write home to my parents. I could do it absolutely openly and freely. She would see to it herself that the letter got mailed. I asked her how long it might be before we were released. It should not take too long, she hoped, but she could not say anything definite. Then I received a pack of cigarettes and was led away -- but not to the cell where Odd was waiting.

For three weeks I now sat alone hungry and bored. My only recreation was to knock on the slot and go to the toilet. On such occasions I sometimes received a cigarette from the guards or found a butt on the floor. I had written a short and uninteresting letter to my parents. I well understood that it would never reach them. With the remainder of the paper I made a

deck of cards, luckily completed just as the pen was taken away from me. In addition, I made a calendar, in order to be able, more or less, to keep track of the days. Beyond that I simply waited for mealtime to come around. In the mornings, like the other prisoners, I received 450 grams of black bread; at 12 o'clock the guard brought soup (cabbage boiled in water), and at 6 o'clock I received a similar portion. In addition, we were entitled to 10 grams of sugar per day to sweeten the warm water we received with the bread. One did not become fat on that diet and the trousers hung looser and looser.

At the end of three weeks the interpreter once more came to fetch me. This time, however, nothing happened except that the doctor examined me. Then I was allowed to move over to Odd's cell. We compared our experiences. On the whole we had been questioned on the same things, except that Odd had been spared the military queries. We were permitted to be together for four days whereupon Odd was again called in for interrogation. It was late in the evening, but I wanted to stay awake and wait until he returned. After a few hours the guards came for me. They indicated to me to take along the blanket, and I was led into a solitary cell once more. Two or three hours later I was brought in for interrogation. This time they had changed interrogator. The new one was a civilian and, through the Norwegian-speaking interpreter, he advised me to tell everything without reservation. "Well," he said toward morning, "the questioning is over and we shall now speak confidentially with one another." He then began questioning me on my political

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opinions. He wondered whether I knew where the front lines ran and he wanted to know what was the attitude in Sweden toward the Russians. I pretended to be politically uninterested and explained that the desire for adventure had pushed me. Then I asked to be given a book or a pen and he promised to do what he could. Furthermore, he would try to see to it that I received better food. He also wondered whether I would care to know how the war was progressing and told me that the Italians had broken with Germany, that the Russians had stopped Hitler's armies and won great victories. I received the impression that the outcome of the war had already been determined.

I was called in for interrogation almost every night. The leader became more and more reserved each time, and after four nights he said that he had come to the conclusion, that both Odd and I were lying and for this reason would no longer enjoy any privileges. I sat in my cell a few days wondering what would happen. Questioning followed upon questioning, always at night, but interrogators were switched. The one who now questioned me was a young lieutenant about 25 years of age, presenting a brutal appearance the first time I saw him. I was pounded with incessant questions. The lieutenant immediately stated that we had lied but that he would certainly be able to extract the truth from us. He wanted to know by whom we were sent, what was our mission, and what reward we would receive for it. Then he stated positively that we were in the pay of the Germans, that there was no use in my denying that point. He was sure of it, anyway, and if we confessed we would have nothing to fear, we would be released and sent home.

From that period on, the first days in September 1943, our surveillance became more and more strict. I was no longer permitted to use the toilet. The guards placed a barrel in the cell and emptied it once a week. I was never allowed to lie down and rest during the days. The moment I attempted to do it, a guard would come in and force me to rise. Neither was I permitted to sit or lean against the wall. If I did, the guard would appear again. Neither did I ever receive a cigarette any more. The mattress was taken away from me, so that a torn dirty blanket remained.

The tone of questioning became more acrimonious each day that passed. I was now always forced to remain standing throughout entire nights during the interrogations. At times I was called in without interpreter. The interrogation leader and the others in the room spoke to each other in Russian to find out whether I did not understand the language after all. Now and then he would make me repeat a word after him, and when I did not understand or when my pronunciation was poor (and that was quite natural) a guard would strike me in the face or kick me. Often enough the NKVD lieutenant took out his pack of cigarettes lighted one to begin with, exhaled the smoke and extended the pack toward me. When I stretched out my hand to take a cigarette, he would quickly pull the pack back and smile mockingly.

"First speak the truth, and then you may smoke as much as you please," he would comment.

He became more and more skillful in inventing little details of torture of that sort. One day he pulled out a revolver

from a drawer and threw it on the table. He intended to shoot me down like a dog if I did not tell the truth, he explained. No one in Sweden knew where I was, and I could, therefore, not expect any help. After all, my friend Odd had confessed to everything and got along so well now, why should I be so stubborn? But I no longer cared very much about either what they said to me or did with me. I had become completely apathetic and sluggish from underfeeding and the unending, nightly interrogations. I did not believe I would ever get out of Russia but refused to yield. I did not want to succumb to the interrogator's scornful laugh and arrogant behavior. I had but one thought in my mind; not to give in, not to begin begging for mercy. It was the truth he wanted after all, and he was getting it.

One interrogation concerned Swedish rationing. The lieutenant wanted to know everything about which cards were valid for sugar, butter, flour, etc. But I, who had never worried about any cards but the restaurant cards, knew, of course, nothing about the numbers and figures on the main card.

"No, of course, not," the interrogator commented sarcastically, "how would you be able to know. You have, no doubt, lived in Germany entirely too long."

And next time he triumphantly threw up a bunch of Swedish restaurant cards onto the table. He wanted to show me what they looked like, he explained scornfully.

We had now reached the beginning of the month of November

and it became colder and colder each day. The usual temperature was 20 to 25 degrees and I felt cold in my light summer trousers, undershirt and shirt, the only clothes I wore aside from my rubber boots (my socks had long been worn out). Furthermore, I was constantly dirty. One bowl of cold water each morning was all one received with which to wash. I never saw any soap or, of course, a razor blade; consequently I had begun growing a full beard. The fleas thrived in it and also felt well at home all over my body. I used to sit and pick fleas in my solitude. It was like a pastime. At least, small wall-furnaces, with their openings toward the corridor, were started up. So, generally speaking, it could have been worse. And worse it became.

THE HUMAN BEING CAN TAKE MORE THAN HE THINKS

One night after the interrogation, the guards passed up my door when they distributed the feed. I pounded violently on the door, but when the guard opened the shutter to find out what was the matter, I merely received a shrug of the shoulder in response to my attempt to explain that my feed ration had been overlooked. A few hours later, I was taken to the camp commandant. I was subjected to a search from head to feet. A guard ripped off the buttons and hooks on my trousers; then a communication was read to me, of which I understood nothing.

The guard then led me out into the corridor and to a cell, situated next to the toilet, which I knew to be unheated. He said something, put up two fingers, and pushed me inside. The cell was pitch dark, it had cement walls and floor but no windows, and it offered no facilities for sitting or lying down. The walls were covered with white-frost, for the temperature outside was about 25 degrees centigrade below zero. The hours passed. I spring up, I jumped up and down. I tried to stand on the threshold, the only wood board in the room. The guard then opened the door and I fell out onto the cement floor. Twenty-four hours passed. I received no food. I asked for some warm water; no, I could not have any. For forty-eight hours I stood in the cold cell before the guards let me out. Those had been long hours, and to this day I cannot understand how I survived. But the human being can take much more than he would ever believe.

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As soon as I attempted to lie down, a guard appeared and pulled me up. That evening I was once more, called in for questioning. The interrogator, the young NKVD lieutenant, smiled scornfully:

"Well, where have you been, Rudfalk? Did you have a nice time?"

I tried to answer as calmly as I could manage that he knew best himself where I had been and just how pleasant it had been. Then he hardened and asked me if I was now ripe to tell the truth. This had merely been a foretaste of the potentialities of the cold cell.

One afternoon at the end of November, a guard came and shoved me out of my cell. He led me out to a waiting car, and for the first time after all these months I saw Odd again. He was pale and thin. We were not allowed to talk to each other; a guard sat between us. First we rode to a military camp in Murmansk and then to the NKVD headquarters. There we were locked up in underground cells for ten days. New interrogations followed, but they were merely repetitions of the earlier ones under the supervision of the NKVD lieutenant. These cells were pitch dark and the food was the same as before -- the soup however tasted a little better. One could now and then find a few grains of barley and pieces of potato in it. My trousers were giving me trouble; they would constantly slip down. I tore a strip out of my shirt and made a belt.

Finally, the lieutenant informed us one day that the interrogations had come to an end and that there remained only for the interpreter to read to us the report of our statements. It was infinitely long and neither Odd nor I had the strength to listen to it. We had to sign the report and then, for the first time since we were imprisoned, we saw an exact date. It was the 9th of December 1943.

In other words, we had had four months of interrogation. The first day we had been locked up in a cell seemed so distant that it might just as well have been four years.

The interpreter informed us that the report would now be submitted to higher authority and we were simply to wait for instructions. A truck carried us northward again, and the succession of grey, monotonous days began. Well, no; the 6th of January became a great and noteworthy day, for on that day I was given a haircut and a shave for the first time in all these months. Then it occurred to me that people home in Sweden were celebrating the Twelfth Night...

After that absolutely nothing happened until one day at the end of January the guard brought Odd, and we were at last given a mattress again. Odd and I now spent our days sitting in our cell pondering over our fate. We were both filled with regrets. I especially reproached myself for not having followed Odd's suggestion that we return home that day we were hiding from the Germans in Finland. I also kept thinking of the lieutenant's words, that nobody in Sweden knew where we were.

On repeated occasions during the interrogations I had requested that I be permitted to get in touch with the Swedish legation in Moscow. The lieutenant used to smile disdainfully; was this any of the Swedish legation's business? After all, I had transgressed Russian laws, hadn't I? I realized that we were absolutely helpless, at the mercy of the Russians.

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THREE YEARS OF FORCED LABOR

On 23 April 1944 the guards came for us and we were once more brought before the interrogation leader. The report on our case had come back from Moscow. Slowly, as though he really enjoyed it, he read our sentence: three years of forced labor, in accordance with article 84 of the Russian penal code, for illegally crossing the border, to be worked off in concentration camp. Three years! Odd and I listened, stunned; yet the interpreter's words did not make a very deep impression on us. We were entirely too exhausted; we had lost the ability to react normally. We were taken back to our cell. What was to happen now? What did a Russian concentration camp look like? We didn't have to wait many days for the answer.

That evening the guards took us out of our cell; we had to follow them out to the barbed-wire enclosure in front of the prison. There we walked about supervised by two guards armed with revolvers ready to fire. God, how good it felt to be able to inhale fresh air again! Except for the trips back and forth to Murmansk, this was the first time we were allowed out of doors. But oh, how exhausted we became! At the end of the half hour we were permitted to stay out we were ~~just~~ as tired as we had been after any one of our night marches in Finland. We were permitted out of doors one half hour each day until 27 April, when our departure to concentration camp was to take place.

On the afternoon of 27 April we received provisions for our journey, consisting of one kilo of black bread (the ordinary Russian ry bread and 200 grams of salt cod to eat on the bread. We were also

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issued a shapka (a cap) and a bashlat, a short padded coat. Then we were led out in the yard to a waiting truck. A great deal of activity reigned there. Obviously other prisoners besides ourselves were being transferred for several guards were bringing a number of them from the various detention barracks.

Roaring and swearing, they herded them to the truck and there either pushed or threw them on to the floor of the truck.

These prisoners constituted the most motley collection of people one could imagine. There were old men and old women, soldiers in torn uniforms, youths of both sexes, yes, even children 10 to 12 years old. There were Russians with pronounced northern appearance, short-statured Yakuts and Tartars with broad cheekbones, oblique-eyed Chinese and swarthy Poles, but they all had something in common. They all were ragged, hungry, underfed, with the scars of long and trying imprisonment stamped on their faces. We were all future recruits of Russia's largest army, the slave army; the army without hope with despair, degradation and death as daily bread, the living dead.

At last we were all loaded onto the truck, some forty prisoners lying on each other like packed sardines. After we had gone less than a kilometer a tire blew, and we had to get off the truck. We were lined up in two files and marched to Murmansk with constant shouts of "bystreya" (hurry up) ringing in our ears. Those who were unable to keep the pace were helped along with a kick in the buttocks. We were apparently in a hurry, the train was probably waiting and had been delayed on account of us. Upon arrival at the station in Murmansk we were loaded into railway cars, specially built

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for transporting prisoners, equipped with window bars and manned by special guards. We sat locked up in those cars close to 36 hours before the train finally started moving. So, apparently there had been a great hurry about getting us to the station!

On the 1st of May the train stopped at a small station, Godina, some 80 or 100 kilometers south of Onega Bay. Odd, I, and Olga, an 18 year old Russian girl from Murmansk serving a ten-year sentence, were fetched by a guard accompanied by a German police dog from the Godina camp. The other prisoners continued on to another place. Late in the evening, after we had been searched from head to foot and had signed a form, we were let in through the gates of the camp. A new life now began for us, a life about which we knew nothing but suspected much. Our suspicions were soon confirmed.

Russian concentration camps consist of barracks arranged in a square, surrounded by a high palisade of spearlike posts.

These camps are surrounded by multiple rows of barbed wire. In each corner outside the camp stands a high watch-tower equipped with searchlights and machine-guns. The camp consists of a number of barracks constructed of logs. New prisoners remained in a quarantine barrack a few days before being transferred to various work units and their respective barracks. In addition, there were administration, hospital, bath and mess barracks, as well as an "isolation" barrack, a special prison in the camp. All administrative duties were performed by prisoners supervised by guard personnel, and the work was organized in the same manner. As a rule, these prisoners were criminals, sentenced for theft, murder, open robbery

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and similar crimes. The heaviest and most strenuous work was generally assigned to the political prisoners. After all, a murderer was better suited for organizing work than was an intellectual prisoner; what counted was to extract the greatest amount of work possible without consideration for the individual!

The prisoners were divided into two categories: the disabled one and those fit for work. The disabled prisoners performed lighter work within or in the neighborhood of the camp and received a food ration consisting of the regulation 500 grams of bread per day and soup (cabbage and water with, now and then, a small piece of fish in it) twice a day. The physically fit were engaged in forestry work, generally 6 or 7 kilometers from camp, and some were occupied with laying rails for the transportation of the cut timber to the railway station; they obtained the same food allotment as the others, but could, if they met a certain standard of work, get an extra ration of up to 200 grams of bread and 60 grams of "sapekanka", hard-boiled porridge made of soy or corn flour. Refusal to work or the unsatisfactory performance of work was "recompensed" with 10 to 12 days in isolation 300 grams of bread, water, and nothing else.

On our first evening we were put in the quarantine barracks which was crowded before we arrived. Everyone assailed us with questions, but having earlier had no possibility of learning the Russian language, we stood about like idiots, unable to answer the questions. Later that evening, a prisoner from one of the work barracks came in to us. He extended his hand and greeted us with the following words: Hello, where do you come from?

Before us stood a small, thin, careworn man about 35 years of age. He was Norwegian and came from Kirkenes; his name was Harrijo.

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Before us stood a small, thin, careworn man about 35 years of age. He was Norwegian and came from Kirkenes; his name was Harrijo.

He had also arrived in Russia with a friend by the name of Harald Rygh, who had come from Stavanger. The latter had died a few months back. They had been in a concentration camp since the beginning of 1943.

Harrijo was interested to hear news from the outside, and we naturally wanted to know how camp life shaped up, the life that would be ours for at least three years to come. We lived on the hope that there might after all be a few bright points in this grey, morbid camp; but after a few hours of talking to Harrijo we found ourselves at the very bottom of the deep pit of hopelessness. He told us how camp life passed, about fellow-prisoners, hunger and hard work, illness, want and misery. His voice was bitter and his face apathetic. He, like all the others, had resigned himself, given in to his fate, abandoned hope and expected nothing. We realized that we, too, would soon feel the same way as he, that we would melt into our environment and merely become numbers in "the legion of the lost". Olga, the young Russian girl from Murmansk, had sat, interested, together with us on the bunk throughout our conversation. She continually interrupted Harrijo with questions about Odd and me, and he explained and translated for her. She offered to do everything in her power to teach us two the Russian language and we were grateful for her promise.

We sat for a long while and talked that first evening and not until 10 o'clock, when the silence bell sounded, did we break up, Harrijo, to return to his barrack without delay, the rest of us, tired from our trip, to lie down and sleep.

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He had also arrived in Russia with a friend by the name of Harald Rygh, who had come from Stavanger. The latter had died a few months back. They had been in a concentration camp since the beginning of 1943.

Harrijo was interested to hear news from the outside, and we naturally wanted to know how camp life shaped up, the life that would be ours for at least three years to come. We lived on the hope that there might after all be a few bright points in this grey, morbid camp; but after a few hours of talking to Harrijo we found ourselves at the very bottom of the deep pit of hopelessness. He told us how camp life passed, about fellow-prisoners, hunger and hard work, illness, want and misery. His voice was bitter and his face apathetic. He, like all the others, had resigned himself, given in to his fate, abandoned hope and expected nothing. We realized that we, too, would soon feel the same way as he, that we would melt into our environment and merely become numbers in "the legion of the lost". Olga, the young Russian girl from Murmansk, had sat, interested, together with us on the bunk throughout our conversation. She continually interrupted Harrijo with questions about Odd and me, and he explained and translated for her. She offered to do everything in her power to teach us two the Russian language and we were grateful for her promise.

We sat for a long while and talked that first evening and not until 10 o'clock, when the silence bell sounded, did we break up, Harrijo, to return to his barrack without delay, the rest of us, tired from our trip, to lie down and sleep.

In spite of our exhaustion that first evening, we were unable

to sleep a wink. During our detention period in Murmansk, we had become accustomed to bedbugs -- but here! They crept about everywhere, hopped up and down on the bunk posts, they crawled over our faces; and in the morning, Olga, the young Russian was completely swollen in the face from all the bites. But after a while one gets used to it; one becomes immune, I suppose, for a few days later we were able to sleep like the other prisoners.

The quarantine was a small barrack divided in the middle by a thin wooden partition to form two rooms. One of the rooms was used to house new prisoners, the other contained the camp's shoe-repair shop. In the latter room, four or five "disabled" were kept busy repairing the boots of the guard personnel and making and repairing the prisoners' foot-gear, mainly sandals made of discarded, sliced tires. Opposite the quarantine was the "isolation" barrack, the camp's detention building, seldom empty and usually filled with prisoners who had been given disciplinary punishments for a variety of reasons.

The barrack-chief of the quarantine, a big, swarthy Armenian, Mamedo, supervised the distribution of food to us. He also distributed the food to those who sat in the isolation barrack. It was he, furthermore, who told us what work we were to perform. He was responsible for seeing that it was carried out, as well. He, in turn, took orders from the camp management. Mamedo's job was not an enviable one, as jobs go, but he did get an extra food ration. Each morning when the distribution of the bread ration took place there was always a lot of quarrelling and arguing, everybody wanted the "garbushka" (the outer crust). The ration consisted of soft, newly-baked dark bread made from unsifted rye or barley flour. The

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bread was baked in large moulds, and each baked loaf weighed $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 kilos. The loaves were then cut up and weighed into rations by the bread-ration distributor. Whereupon each barrack-chief fetched the bread for his group. It was preferable to get one's portion so cut as to include as much of the baked crust as possible. The crust is usually better baked and thus lighter; hence, such portion is somewhat larger than it would be if it were cut from the center part of the loaf, which was often badly baked, heavy and tasteless.

The same situation prevailed when the thin soup was distributed. Each prisoner had his own bowl to eat in, and when the soup bucket had been brought to the barrack, the prisoners had to stand in line and each in turn received his portion. The prisoners jealously watched each other's bowl to check if someone happened to get a few pieces of cabbage more than the others. If this happened, a din proclaiming the unjustness of the distribution would immediately occur.

One can understand the behavior of the prisoners when one considers the circumstances in which they lived. The most important thing in their lives was the food ration. They constantly felt a gnawing hunger and their thoughts circled uninterruptedly about the food problem. ~~when, later on, I was confined to the~~ hospital barrack, it was a daily occurrence for the prisoners who suffered from dysentery or an advanced stage of tuberculosis merely to sip their ration of soup. They were much too ill and weak to be able to eat. Invariably one of the less sick would step forward and take the bowls from the afflicted and gobble down the soup without the least thought of the risk of contamination. The instinct of self-preservation, the instinct of quiet one's hunger

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was always stronger than the fear of the risks to which one exposed one's self.

The first day of our stay at the camp we had to report to the camp doctor for an examination. He was chiefly responsible for determining what sort of work we were to carry out. Harrijo was permitted to accompany us to act as interpreter. The doctor questioned us at some length concerning what sort of sentence we were serving, how long we had been imprisoned, etc. He thought that we looked thin and wretched; he especially shook his head at me. We would be allowed to remain in quarantine a few weeks and then be transferred to a work team.

Before we returned to our barrack the doctor asked me if he could buy my trousers from me; if so, he would see to it that another pair were issued to me out of the camp's supply. I had a pair of strong and sturdy riding breeches and apparently they appealed to him. After some bargaining, I let him have my trousers for 3 kilograms of bread. It was common practice for the prisoners who, so to speak, belonged to the upper class in the camp, doctors, store keepers, cooks, team-chiefs, etc., to carry on trading of this sort. A large portion of these civilian clothes travelled from the camps to the civilian population and were converted into bread, tobacco, desirable items in camp. The guards looked through their fingers on such matters and even acted as intermediaries in such transaction -- in return for a satisfactory commission for themselves, of course. After a while we had exchanged all our own clothes for bread and acquired instead the more uniform clothing of the camp, that is to say, discarded military garments.

OLGA TAUGHT US RUSSIAN

Olga, the young Russian woman, kept her promise to try to teach us the Russian language. She was always with us, during work as well as during leisure time. The gang in quarantine had to take care of the wood-cutting as well as to render assistance in minor repair jobs. Olga talked continuously and explained what this or that thing was called, and she was never happier than when we began being able to express ourselves in whole sentences and remembered the names of the various objects.

One evening, when the four of us, Harrijo, Odd, Olga and I, sat and chatted, I asked Olga what offense she had committed to be sent here and deserve such a severe penalty. She then told us that she was born in the Ukraine and that her parents had been peasants. In 1932, under the collectivization program, her father had been branded as a kulak and had been arrested whereupon she and her mother, were deported to Northern Russia. She had not heard from her father since he was imprisoned and her mother had died when Olga was 14 years old. At the age of 16 she married an officer in the Red Army and moved to Marmansk. Her husband had fought on the front against the Germans where he was taken prisoner. It was rumored, however, that he had deserted, and, inasmuch as he had been home on leave immediately before that, Olga was apprehended and put ⁱⁿ quarantine, with the result that she was sentenced to ten years of punishment for possessing knowledge of his planned desertion.

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After fourteen days in quarantine, we were transferred to the yoke-brigade. It was a sort of convalescence brigade to which all prisoners storve to belong. Those who were underfed and weak but otherwise considered by the management as potentially elibible for forestry work were assigned to this brigade.

The food there was better and the ration more generous. We worked 4 to 5 hours a day on the camp's farm, located just outside the camp, and were off duty the rest of the day. The work was not too strenuous, the weather was good and the sun shone; we felt that we were relatively well off, considering the circumstances.

On June 1st the camp management gave the members of the brigade a medical examination in order to determine which prisoners should be transferred to the genuine work brigades. The camp commandant, the doctor and a clerk sat at a table at one end of the barrack and we prisoners had to form a queue, each in his turn stepping forward, stating his name, the penalty and the paragraph number of the penal code in accordance with which he had been sentenced. The doctor checked our eyes, felt the muscles of our arms and legs, said a few words to the clerk, and then passed to the next prisoner in line. Unconsciously my thought turned to a Swedish horse-fair, where the buyers crowd around the horses, look into their mouths to find their age by their teeth, press their hind quarters and legs and coldly speculate about how much work this and that horse might

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perform. One was once more reminded of the fact that, as far as these gentlemen were concerned, one had no value as a human being, that the value of the individual consisted of how much work could be expected of him.

Most of us were discharged from the convalescence brigade and assigned to work in the forest; Odd, was among these. He became part of a brigade which was to lay rails in the forest between the various spots where the timber was being cut and the loading place at the railway station. As for me, I was to remain with the convalescence brigade a while longer, and I was very happy about it. The long period spent in prison had completely sapped me of all strength, and a sufficient recovery to make it worth while to place me in a wood-cutting brigade required, of course, a good deal of time.

Odd felt ill one morning in the early part of June; I advised him not to report for work and instead to remain in his bunk in the barrack. He didn't want to do this, for the doctor had refused to certify to his illness, and to fail to show up for work was punishable. I tried to persuade him, but I was unsuccessful. He lined up for roll call. That evening he was very ill; he had hemorrhaged during the day. I accompanied him to the hospital barrack, to which he was immediately admitted; he had a temperature of 39 degrees Centigrade. I visited the hospital barrack every evening after work to inquire about his condition and to exchange a few words with him, but I was always refused admission. Since I knew that he was ill, what business had I calling on him? That was the answer I always received.

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In the evening of the 12th of June a hospital attendant came to me and told me that if I wanted to see Odd, I had better come at once. I hurried over and arrived just in time to meet the pallbearers in the corridor carrying a canvas stretcher between them. On the stretcher lay Odd, naked, hollow-eyed and thin. He was dead.

I am not afraid of confessing that I stood in the corridor and looked but saw nothing -- my eyes were filled with tears. Odd, my loyal friend; we, who had become welded together through the many dangers we had faced and experienced together. We had risked our lives for a just and honest cause and then had been stopped by the Russians' suspiciousness of everything and everyone. Now Odd lay there dead, tossed up naked on a canvas stretcher like an animal. I hurried out; I felt I had to be by myself to think, or rather to escape my thoughts. Everything was meaningless.

At the end of June my turn came to leave the convalescence brigade; I was assigned to a wood-cutting brigade and ordered to report for roll call the following morning.

Reveille was at 5 o'clock, whereupon we went to the "stolvaya" [mess hall] and received our bread ration and a bowl of cabbage soup. At 6 o'clock the gong for the line up and roll call of the various brigades sounded. Around half-past 6 we were ready to depart; the gates were opened and we marched out. We paused outside the gates for a few minutes while the tools were dealt out and guards and police dogs were assigned to the various brigades usually 2 to 3 guards and one dog to each. Everything was then set and we marched away in pairs and with orders to keep in line.

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spread out at intervals of a few hundred meters. For each brigade (20 to 25 prisoners) an area of operations was staked out, and to leave the area was considered an attempt to escape; it happened that prisoners were fired at for going beyond the area.

Almost half of the brigade to which I belonged consisted of women. We cut tie-lumber in 2 to 2.5 meter lengths and everything was utilized. Anything that was not suitable for ties was collected to convert into pulp, and everything had to be sorted, stacked and measured each day. The daily work quota was 5 cubic meters per person; furthermore, all rubbish had to be swept up and placed on large heaps. Each brigade divided itself up into groups of 5 or 6 prisoners who must work together; a collective quota applied to each group. Other work brigades loaded the timber we had cut onto wagons with flanged wheels which were pulled on narrow-gauge track by horses down to the loading station, to be shipped on to the refineries. The brigade to which Odd had belonged took care of laying the rails as the area of lumber cutting expanded.

Our work was strenuous and heavy and not infrequently one was forced to start the long way back to camp without having filled his quota of work and, consequently, without getting anything in excess of the already meager fare in spite of the fact that one felt dead-tired and hungry.

Nor were our work tools such as to stimulate one to any "stakchanov" feats of performance; rather, they could well have defended their place in an exhibition on how forestry tools should not be cared for and how they should not look. For felling large trees we used long pit-saws, and for crosscutting, arched saws with

wooden arches whose blades never stayed taut and for this reason were difficult to use. Of course, we were not too particular in our care of them. Each evening we had to return the tools to the supply section where other prisoners were charged with sharpening and adjusting them. The next day someone else would get the tools previously used by another and things turned out as expected. Unfortunately one's performance of work suffered by this state of affairs.

Work continued as described above throughout the day. Around noon we were given a half-hour break but no meal; not until after our return to the camp in the evening was any food handed to us. Work ceased as a rule between 5 o'clock and half-past 5, whereupon we gathered our tools, lined up and marched back to camp. We were searched in front of the gates and then let in.

In the morning, after the brigades had left for work "proverka", a control count of the prisoners took place. At the sound of a gong all prisoners who were out of doors had to return immediately to their barracks and were not permitted to leave them until the check had been completed. This happened twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, and as a rule required about half an hour each time. If the count did not correspond to the list it could take a long while, indeed. I particularly remember one evening in November 1945; the control count came late that evening; everyone had eaten the compulsory soup and many had retired for the night when the gong sounded. We were lined up in front of our bunks and the guards came in to make the count. We waited for the signal indicating that the proverka had been completed, but nothing happened. Instead, two guards returned and recounted twice, and when the signal still did

not sound, we understood that something was amiss. The guards returned once more and started shoving us out of the barrack; the count was to be made outside and we were to hurry it up. Many of the prisoners were only half-dressed, but there was no time for dressing; the only thing to do was to grab a blanket quickly and wrap it around oneself.

All the prisoners were then herded to the clearing before the gate, lined up and admonished not to leave the lines without order. Rollcall of numbers, names, sentences and penal code paragraph followed, and once called and checked off each prisoner moved over to the other side but had to remain in line there, too. This was in the middle of winter and it was very cold. Inasmuch as the entire procedure lasted a couple of hours, it is not surprising that most of us were frozen, especially those who were not fully dressed.

It was later discovered that two prisoners who had worked as stable guards were missing. They had spent many years in the camp and, being considered reliable, had not been under surveillance. Now they had seized their chance and run away. I do not know what became of them; they were probably caught and placed in one of the special penal camps, feared by everyone, to which prisoners who had committed major offenses in camp or had been insubordinate were transferred.

Prisoners committed to these special camps usually served 4 to 5 months and up to one year there. While there, they received a reduced food ration consisting of the regulation 300 grams of bread and soup and nothing else. They carried out forestry work, and there were no hospital barracks or convalescence brigades. It was all work, and if a prisoner became ill he was ordinarily

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doomed. Some prisoners in our camp had managed to survive a term in one of these special camps, and they stated that the death rate was frighteningly high and the conditions dismal. It often happened that prisoners dropped during work; they would be dragged aside and work would continue as if nothing had happened.

The days grew long, grey and gloomy; everything was always the same, regardless of the weather. Reveille at 5 o'clock in the morning, departure to work at half-past 6, return to camp around 6 or 7 in the evening, and everybody wet, hungry and tired. One headed straight for the stolovaya ate one's bowl of soup and then was happy to be able to return to the barrack and turn in. Each barrack held 80 to 100 prisoners. In the middle stood a single oven of masonry, and, as a result, there was a constant shortage of space for drying clothes. It was better to let them dry on one's body, for then they could not be stolen or exchanged. The beds, consisting of upper and lower bunks, were arranged in pairs along the walls with a long aisle running down the middle through the barrack. These were wooden boards on each side of a middle post. The bed clothing consisted of a mattress, filled with cutter chips (not exactly eiderdown beds!), and a blanket; a slanting wooden board served as pillow. A small board, carrying the number, name, penal code paragraph and sentence of the prisoner, was nailed to the foot of each bunk.

The days thus passed, each day similar to the preceding one, grey and dismal. Harrijo, who had been ill for some time, was finally discharged from the hospital barrack. He used to visit me in the evenings after work and sit and chat, and one evening he told me his story. I shall attempt to repeat it.

Harrijo had been one of the most ardent Communists in the Kirkenes area. He was a member of the Communist Party management in the district of Firmark and a trusted man. When, on the 9th of April, 1940, the Germans occupied Norway, Harrijo entered espionage work on behalf of the English. An unfortunate circumstance led to his arrest by the Germans in the summer of 1941. His father was also arrested and transferred to Germany where he was tortured to death in a concentration camp. After prolonged interrogation and torture (he showed me the scars from the beatings) Harrijo was sentenced to death. He was waiting his execution when one day policeman Harald Rygh unlocked his cell door and, with him fled to the large wooded regions along the border to Northern Finland. There they encountered a patrol of Russian partisans whose headquarters was located in that region. They remained there for three months and collaborated with the partisans, carried out raids down to the Norwegian settlements and collected information on the German positions. These data were transmitted by radio to the Russian headquarters in Murmansk.

In the beginning of 1942 the Russian patrol was called back to Murmansk, and Harrijo and Rygh went along. They remained in Murmansk half a year, enjoying complete liberty; they worked as orderlies to the Russian military officers and were allowed to live and eat in the staff quarters. Then suddenly they were arrested and put in prison, accused of espionage. No amount of protesting their innocence helped. After five months of imprisonment and exhausting interrogation, they were transferred to the Godina concentration camp without having received sentence. Not until July 1944 did Harrijo obtain his sentence (Rygh had died during this time)

15 years of forced labor for counter-revolutionary action in accordance with paragraph 58 of the Russian penal code. Such was the gratitude for the fine assistance Harrijo had given the Russians. I do not doubt for one moment that Harrijo was innocent of the crime for which he was punished.

I later submitted information about Harrijo to the Norwegian legation in Moscow. Since my return home I have communicated with his wife and the Norwegian Ambassador in Stockholm and submitted all data on Harrijo. As far as I know, the Norwegian Foreign Office has also petitioned through the Russian Ambassador for an investigation of the cases of Harrijo and Rygh. The Russian authorities have confirmed that Rygh died in Russia but that he died a natural death and had not been imprisoned. As for Harrijo, the reply stated that he was nowhere to be found and had never been in Russia!

The food situation worsened later on during the summer; the bread dough became more adulterated and stickier, and we had the impression, furthermore, that the soup underwent a marked deterioration. The cabbage ran out and the occasional pieces of fish that we had sometimes found in the soup completely disappeared. Instead of the cabbage there appeared what we in Sweden call rose bay, a tall red-flowered plant, here at home often found growing in ditches. The prisoners were dissatisfied, and on occasions there were vociferous complaints over the deterioration. Some of the complainers were thrown into the isolation barrack, and the camp commandant made a disciplinary speech in which he mentioned, among other things, that the food situation had, on account of the war, become such that even the civilian population had to eat this type of soup. He showed a picture from Pravda in which Stalin and Molotov, together

with a number of other high officials, were seen seated at a prepared table and where the soup consisted of "stjevel" [shchi?] its Russian name. He pointed out that when, because of the emergency situation their own beloved Leader and Teacher, had to put up with the same food as the common man, then we as prisoners had no grounds for complaint. Personally, of course, I do not believe that even the most fanatic Russian believed that story. The whole thing was merely the usual propaganda stuff to boost the population's courage and trust.

We had to patch and mend our clothes as best we could, and for this purpose we had made sewing-needles out of old wire and with the help of a file in way of tool, maybe not as good as factory-made needles but at least with eyes and fully usable. The thread we made out of old gauze bandages by pulling out the threads and twisting them together in the desirable thickness. The clothing and accessories issued by the camp consisted of discarded army uniforms, and the shoes were so-called "botinki", low-top shoes made out of discarded automobile tires, or "lapti" a type of sandals of plaited birch-bark or twined hemp. This foot-gear did not, of course, hold up very well against the Russian winter cold or the spring floods, and frost-bitten feet was a common occurrence among the prisoners. During the winter, a limited number of pairs of valenki, felt boots, were distributed to prisoners who had specially distinguished themselves through good work, but it was primarily the administrative personnel and the brigade leaders who obtained these boots. In this instance, as in all others, we prisoners were at the mercy of the camp management.

Tobacco was, of course, a luxury one had to kiss goodbye. I had earlier been a heavy smoker, but now I had to get out of that habit. To be sure, most camps carried on some tobacco-growing, and its yield served as a premium for those prisoners who performed the best work. Here again the question of distribution was a matter of discretion; as a rule, those who first received an allotment were the guards and the elite, and then, in the last resort, some ordinary prisoner might be considered. Tobacco also reached the camps through barter trade, in which the guard personnel collaborated, but it was rather expensive. One matchbox of "makchorka" commanded a price of 200 grams of bread. Many prisoners made use of this means of getting hold of tobacco, but I did not feel inclined to sacrifice almost half of my already insufficient bread ration to obtain enough tobacco for 2 or 3 cigarettes. I preferred doing without.

ON TO NEW CAMPS AND COMRADES

Well, thus my term in the Godina camp passed and, without realizing it myself, began to approach its end. The redistribution and transfer of prisoners was constant. One transfer of prisoners would arrive and another would leave in an eternal stream. I suppose the reason for this was to prevent us from becoming acquainted with the population outside the camps who, of course, could not avoid seeing us as we went back and forth to work in the woods or the fields.

I became acquainted with a Finnish prisoner in the Godina camp. He worked there as shoemaker. He explained to me that he had been a fervent Communist and, wishing to live in the country of his

ideal, had moved to Russia as early as in 1934. He retained his Finnish citizenship, however. When Russia attacked Finland in 1939, without previous warning the NKVD came and got him and his wife. They were both put in concentration camp but, of course, not in the same camp, and since then he had never seen his wife nor heard anything from her. He did not know whether she was still alive. As a matter of fact, he did not know anything at all; he had never been subjected to interrogation and had not been officially convicted, but he did not believe that he would ever regain liberty. After all, six years had passed since he was imprisoned. Quiet and bitter, he sat and repaired shoes day in and day out.

As for me, my departure from the Godina camp took place on the first of September, 1944. On the morning of that day I received an order to return my bedclothes to the storekeeper and then wait for further orders. A few hours later we lined up in front of the gate; the compulsory search and rollcall then followed, whereupon we marched out through the gates from the Godina camp for the last time. Where were we now headed for?

Ninety of us prisoners were leaving the camp. Harrijo was among us and joined me in line. We chatted about the past and about where we might be going. He did not have any idea of where we would end up, but it would probably be a long journey. As a matter of fact, where we were going was immaterial; we agreed things there could hardly be worse than where we had just been.

We had put the Godina camp a good distance behind us and were now marching through a small kolkhoz village. The road crossed a field where the village population was in process of harvesting

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We had put the Godina camp a good distance behind us and were now marching through a small kolchoz village. The road crossed a field where the village population was in process of harvesting

potatoes. A horse was hitched to a cart loaded with sacks of potatoes. For one reason or another, the horse became frightened and belted away with the cart rattling behind. A great number of potatoes from a torn sack fell from the cart and scattered along the road, almost causing a fight at the head of our column. Everyone pulled, pushed and tore at each other in the general struggle over the rolling potatoes.

Roaring and swearing, the guards ran up to where the potatoes had fallen and let loose with rifle butts against the prisoners, showering them with blows and abusive words. In spite of the intervention of the guards, most prisoners succeeded in grabbing one or a few potatoes and were now walking along munching on them, much as one would apples. Hunter, our constant companion, had numbed us to such a degree that, as Harrijo expressed it, we behaved exactly like a pack of wild dogs to which a meat-bone had been thrown. Not even the rifle-butt blows of the guards acted as a deterrent upon us when it came to getting hold of something edible.

We finally arrived at the small railway station where four months earlier I had been fetched by the guard personnel and together with Odd and Olga had begun the march towards the Godina camp. What had not happened in that period of time! Odd, my faithful friend and fellow-sufferer, had ended his days and was now lying in ~~some~~ mass-grave back there, and Olga, the unfortunate young Russian woman, she who had been with us constantly always willing to help, eagerly leading our first faltering steps on the winding and rocky road of the Russian language, she, too, was gone. As for the individual prisoner, he had become apathetic, cynical and indifferent, he had melted into the routine life of the prisoner,

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become stamped with class-fellowship, the class in which all personality is obliterated. One had become one of the many in Russia's army of millions, the legion of the lost.

Inside the station area we were immediately shoved into a waiting prison car, equipped with window-bars. The car was an ordinary passenger carriage converted into a prisoner transport; it had wooden benches and shelves above all the way to the ceiling. Each end of the car was partitioned off into a small room for the guard personnel, and all windows had been provided with lattices and shutters locked on the outside to prevent us from seeing the landscape outside. The lighting was provided by a small latticed window in the ceiling, but it let precious little light through. The prisoner car was manned by its own guards, so that the guards from the Godina camp returned to camp after we had been placed in the car. What would happen now and where were we being taken? We put these questions to the guards, who merely shrugged their shoulders in reply.

As mentioned, the little latticed window in the ceiling admitted a scant amount of light, with the result that the interior of the car took on a rotesque appearance. Everywhere on the benches the shelves and the floor, the prisoners had settled themselves, making use of every inch of space. It was very crowded and we had to step over one another in order to reach the "ubornaya" the place where one was permitted to attend to personal needs; To make one's way to the ubornaya in the dark of night constituted quite a little adventure. Someone would always get stepped upon, shouting and swearing would immediately result and not seldom lead to fights and blows.

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The train started moving in the afternoon, and a few hours later we received our food ration, consisting of bread and, instead of soup, "kamsa", a sort of anchovy, unpackaged and highly salted. Twice every twenty-four hours, in the morning and the evening, we were given water, two pails each time. The water ration did not go very far, hot and unendurable as it was inside that car, and what with the salty kamsa, we were all ardently hoping that this torturous journey soon would come to an end. The train travelled very slowly and made half-hour-long stops; after seventy-four hours, however, we arrived at last, the doors were thrown open and we tumbled out. Less than one kilometer from this point we marched in through the gates of a new concentration camp. This camp was part of ten or twelve known as the Poksa camps, located some 80 to 90 kilometers from Arkengelsk in a southerly direction.

A new concentration camp, new fellow-prisoners, new guards and yet exactly the same. The same sorrowful circumstances, the same poor food, the same hopelessness and greyness as at Godina and the same bad soup made of cabbage or, at worst, rosebay. This eternal soup, the morbid distinctive mark of the Russian concentration camps! All this killed our hopes that better conditions would reign here, that things would be somewhat better for us.

Harrigo was detailed as "sapozhnik" shoemaker, while I landed in a repair brigade. Our work consisted of repairing the walls in the various barracks. We started with the outer walls and later, when the cold weather set in, we turned to the inside walls. The barracks were constructed of logs, caulked inside and outside. Clay was used as plaster and it often dried, crumbled and fell down; consequently, repairs were constantly required. From newly felled pine

we cut meter-long blocks and cleaved these into thin sections, which split into laths. We plaited these laths loosely into squares, nailed these to the walls and then smeared the clay-plaster over them. Five of us were occupied with this job; we received no extra ration but had to content ourselves with the usual 500 grams of bread.

Most of our fellow-prisoners from the camp at Godina were assigned to timber-cutting brigades, but we all shared a common barrack. The timber-cutters complained that the timber was much worse here than at Godina; furthermore, they had to walk farther here and the march to work passed over marshy terrain, so that they were always wet way up on their legs before they even reached work in the morning. They hoped things would improve once the cold froze these marshes.

ILLNESS AND DEATH IN THE CAMP

Well, we all had our worries and difficulties to struggle with and things were going to get worse -- dysentery made its entry into camp. This disease and tuberculosis reigned over the camps and harvested many victims. The prisoners possessed no power of resistance, for the hard work, the insufficient and vitamin-poor food, the lack of any kind of hygiene as well as, and not least, the loss of heart and the hopelessness, had prepared the ground. Dysentery often occurred in the camps, but here its violence reached the proportions of an epidemic. It swept forward victoriously, harvesting new victims every day; nothing could be done to block its ravaging. The hospital barracks quickly filled up to the bursting point. To be admitted to them was to have one's death-certificate issued in advance. During the six weeks that the dysentery raised havoc in the camp, more than half of my fellow-prisoners from Godina were carried off by death.

The day came when it was my turn to crawl into a double bed between two other fellow-sufferers. The beds were ordinary military beds placed in pairs with a small aisle at each end and an open aisle down the middle. Three of us had to lie in each double-bed, and even four when the shortage of beds reached its peak. There were some 80 of us in the barrack; many of the sick were incapable of retaining either urinary or fecal matter, the weakened organism no longer had any control over the muscles.

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Some American medicine against dysentery arrived at last. It was kept in small glass bottles containing 4 to 5 centiliters and tasted something like cognac. It helped a little, of course, but most of the victims were so weakened through underfeeding on the one hand and their illness on the other, that there remained no hope for them. Some died calmly and quietly, unnoticeably slipping from their normal, apathetic condition to the long eternal rest; others turned desperate.

I remember Ivan particularly well. He lay a few beds away from me. He had served in the war and had been wounded. Why he had been sentenced to forced labor, I do not know. He was so weak that he could not sit up in bed. One morning, however, he gathered up sufficient strength for an unsuspected effort. He sat up in bed, a rigid expression in his eyes, and pointing before him, blasphemed Communism and all of Russia and cursed everyone and everything. The words gushed from his mouth, wild, disconnected. It was horrible to behold this thin figure with the rigid and twisted grin on his face. Then Ivan fell backwards and was dead.

On my side of the bed lay a Volga German called Klinch. He had been ill rather long; he was suffering from tuberculosis in its last stage and had dysentery as well. His stench was unbearable, his shirt was spotted with coughed-up, coagulated blood, and his towels often moved while he was in bed. Now he simply lay waiting for the end. I was awakened one morning by his death rattle and his struggle for air; his face was sallow and foam trickled about his mouth. I realized what the matter was and shouted for someone to get the doctor. The doctor came, took his pulse, looked at him a

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while, shrugged his shoulders and left. Hopeless. Shortly thereafter the German died. I pulled up the blanket over his head and waited for the attendants to remove him. It was a long time before they did. Our breakfast ration was passed around and I seized the opportunity to ask that the deceased be taken away; I did not particularly enjoy lying next to a corpse, especially one that smelled so bad. It was not until in the afternoon that he was fetched, and by evening I had got a new bedmate. He had to lie in the same bedclothes in which Klinch had lain.

I found it difficult to understand why such indifference was evidenced in the matter of removing from the barrack the prisoners who had passed on during the night, but I obtained the explanation from the others who had been there longer. The facts were that when the guards carried out the "proverka", the counting of the prisoners, in the morning, any prisoner who had died during the night but still remained in his bed at the time was included in the count, and consequently was allotted a bread ration. The doctor and the attendants of course took the ration for themselves: it constituted a valuable addition to their own insufficient ration. This type of thing occurred everywhere, and a death case was often kept concealed for several days in this manner. The guards were surely aware of this situation but were not concerned over it.

At the end of December, 1944, I departed once more. This time it was merely a question of a transfer to a camp 5 kilometers farther away. Approximately 40 of us disabled prisoners were to be transferred to the new camp where a barrack had been made ready for us. We were carried to sleighs and driven the scanty kilometer to the railway track where a train stood waiting. There we were lifted

up and placed in a freight car: mattresses were laid out on the floor and blankets were spread over us. The transfer took little time, for the new camp was located right next to the railway, and we were soon settled in our new place in a regular hospital barrack.

The barrack was old, cold and draughty, as well as crowded. There were 20 double-beds with two blankets to each bed; at times there were some 70 of us in the barrack, and as a rule three and sometimes even four had to share one bed. But at least some consideration was given here to the sickest prisoners, who were permitted to lie alone and closest to the furnace in one corner of the room.

A small office, where the nurses resided and where even a medicine cabinet was to be found, had been partitioned off nearest the entrance, a small and insufficient room, to be sure, but all the same a thing worth seeing in a prison camp.

The camp doctor was a mannish woman. Her name was Elizaveta Jankevich and she had once been a military doctor with captain's rank but had fallen into disgrace and landed on the bench of the accused. Here she now was, and she faced many years in her new role. She was a tall and stately woman, 35 years of age with an imperious voice. Her hair was jet black and her eyes flashing; her appearance was Polish rather than Russian. She always wore black leather boots, an army coat hanging loosely from her shoulders and a Cossack cap on her head. When she appeared walking passed the window on her way to her daily inspection of the hospital barrack, a murmur travelled through the room: "Jankevich is coming." Unconsciously we began straightening our beds, smoothing out the blankets, etc. We had great respect for her and the Lord have mercy upon him who was caught by her wrath! Her eyes would then flash like lightning and her

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voice would lash out and inevitably scourge the unfortunate. Even the most hardened criminal would on such occasions become meek as a lamb. To provoke her anger could have unsuspected consequences, for it was she primarily who governed the weal and woe of the prisoners.

The sick were divided into two groups, a general group and one consisting of those who suffered from anaemia and underfeeding. The camp management counted on being able to transfer the latter group to forestry work once the period of illness over. Almost throughout my illness I belonged to this group. We received better food than the general group, for the management's primary concern was to build us up so that we would be fit for work. Doctor Jankevich had unrestricted authority to assign anyone she pleased to the one group or the other; this in itself was sufficient reason not to expose oneself to her disgrace. Elizaveta Jankevich's subordinate, the fair-complexioned nurse, Maria Ivanovna was the exact opposite. She was a delicate 30 year old woman, very calm and quiet and liked by everyone. She always had a kind word for all of us and gladly sang some sentimental song while working. The only occasions on which she became angry were when her order not to smoke was violated. She was inflexible on that point; no smoking as long as we were in the hospital barrack. Whenever she caught someone smoking surreptitiously, she would become transformed; otherwise so mild and friendly, she would become furious and her eyes would throw sparks, she would stamp her feet on the floor and threaten immediate discharge from the hospital barrack and assignment to a work brigade. As a rule, her threats were not carried out and about half an hour later everything would be well again.

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Everyone got 400 grams of bread per day, soup twice a day, in the morning and evening, and at noon polnik, also a kind of soup, made from serviceberries. The latter soup was somewhat bitter because of the absence of sugar, but it probably contained certain vitamins and everyone appreciated it. In the evening, those who belonged to the group of underfed received in addition some zapekanka or some fish with the regulation cabbage soup. Some days we were able to get a sort of grain soup instead of the cabbage soup or in the event there was no fish or zapekanka. On very rare occasions we even received a small quantity of milk; the sickest prisoners and those belonging to the group of underfed would get 100 grams per person. In the afternoons we obtained a cup of boiling hot water on which we were as keen as Swedes are on their afternoon coffee.

I remained in sickbed from December 1944 until August 1945. I was ill practically all that time -- well, maybe not entirely ill, after all. I managed to get through dysentery, but I was so weak, afterwards, that I did not have the strength to drag myself out of bed. I lay and saw the days roll by, without shape and without content, but all the while I had one clear thought in mind; I did not want to die, I wanted to go on living in spite of everything, I would not allow them to bury me in Russian soil.

.. And still, I ~~did not~~ have much hope of regaining freedom. Practically all foreign prisoners I had run into had already worked off their sentence and yet were still in detention. Furthermore, no one who had been sentenced in accordance with the 84th paragraph had ever been known to have been permitted to leave a concentration camp.

Thus the winter of 1944-45 went by. It had been very cold; the temperature in the barrack had seldom risen above 11 degrees centigrade, it was usually lower. Those who were lying next to the single pane windows as a rule were forced to sacrifice one blanket to hang in front of the window to keep out the worst of the draught and cold. In spring, things improved somewhat when the sun began warming up the barrack. We then were able to sit up in bed and play domino, those among us who were well enough, that is. I personally began coming around rather well, having been almost done for at one time. My weight, which normally lies around 75 to 78 kilos, had dropped to 46.5 kilos.

The Russians are very fond of domino, and it is a very interesting game when one plays with partner and opponents; it is something like whist, and we took full advantage of the possibilities which it offered for sociability.

During late spring and during summer we were allowed to spend several hours per day out of doors; that was an undescribably pleasant feeling after so many months in a crowded, stinking hospital barrack.

During my spell in the hospital barrack I came into closer contact with my fellow-prisoners. I started to be able to speak Russian tolerably well and one was pretty much restricted to passing one's time in conversation. No books were available, barring a few exceptions, and those books were seldom read, for the prisoner who succeeded in getting hold of a book would tear the pages out it and use them for cigarette paper; the same fate befell the back copies of Pravda which occasionally found its way to us. Such behavior is understandable, for there was an acute

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shortage of paper for rolling cigarettes. A book or newspaper represented a very valuable supply and as such could be used to advantage in trading transactions.

Most of the prisoners were so-called political prisoners and had been sentenced in accordance with either paragraph 84 or 58. The majority of the foreign prisoners had been sentenced under paragraph 84, which applied to illegal border-crossing and under which the minimum penalty almost without exception called for three years.

Paragraph 58 was the most dreaded paragraph in the Russian penal code and it was also the paragraph under which the greater part of the Russian prisoners had been sentenced. The paragraph comprises 14 articles dealing with various crimes such as high treason, counterrevolutionary action, desertion, espionage, sabotage against the state and production plans, etc. The term "political criminal" in the Soviet Union comprises not only such persons who in one manner or another have devoted themselves to political activity of a sort displeasing from the point of view of the rulers; it is not a question of some sort of elite or organized faction or activity but covers all persons belonging to anyone of the categories enumerated under the paragraph's various articles. Many of these persons are as primitive and low-standing, from a cultural point of view, as are the criminal prisoners. Many of them are Asiatic nomads -- Turkmenians, Kirghiz, Uzbeks, etc. -- who experienced even greater difficulties than the Russian population of Europe in adapting themselves to collectivization. They found it hard to adapt themselves to a system which in every respect conflicts with their religion and traditions. For instance, it may be that they would have some agricultural machines with which they were

not familiar out in the fields and that, as a consequence, these machines became rusty; by doing this they sabotaged certain production plans and were automatically transformed into "political criminals" in accordance with paragraph 58. The trials which precede such sentences are, of course, also illusory inasmuch as the interrogations are carried out in prison and as the accused are not permitted to defend themselves during the proceedings of the court. No attorneys are placed at their disposal and one can be certain of a sentence beforehand, for in reality there is no human activity which a court with "good" intention cannot bring in under the points of this paragraph, if it be consistent with the aims of the rulers. Those who were sentenced in accordance with paragraph 58 usually obtained very severe penalties, running from 5 to 25 years. The most common sentences called for 10 to 15 years and the prisoners who had served their term and possibly were released were never permitted to return to their former place of residence; instead, they were deported to some distant place. The deportations which occurred during and after the war were, as a rule, connected with reconstruction work.

STRANGE HUMAN DESTINIES

I often lay in bed talking to my bedmates, David Barmenka and Viktor Lebedev, and before long I learned their personal histories.

David Barmenka was a 25 year old Hungarian Jew who throughout his entire life had never known anything but persecutions and suffering. He was the son of a Jewish farm labourer whose only wealth consisted of a lot of ragged children. At an early age David had to start to

help support his many hungry and ragged brothers and sisters. He was ambitious, however. In his scanty free time he read and studied and attended night classes, and eventually he became employed as apprentice to a printer, quickly advancing to typographer. The period immediately following 1938 became a troubled period for all Jews in Hungary. The pronounced hostility towards the Jews, which found expression in the so-called Jewish laws, made itself felt more and more and resulted in the dismissal from their positions and the harrassing in general of thousands of Jews. David, too, was dismissed from the printing firm after a while and had to manage by means of all sorts of odd jobs, only to be shipped as a civilian worker to the Russo-Hungarian front lines after the outbreak of the war. These civilian workers were of Jewish origin, as a rule, and were badly treated and poorly fed. Many among them succeeded in escaping to Russia; David Barmenka was among these contingents of refugees. Once on Russian territory they were "taken care of" and transferred to a general assembling point outside Kiev.

After various interludes in different concentration camps, he had landed here; actually, he should have been released by then for his compulsory 3-year sentence for illegal border crossing had been worked off in December 1944. When I was set free in March 1946 he was still there and had abandoned all hope of ever seeing freedom again. This uncertainty of ever being released exerted a frightening psychological pressure, and for many prisoners who succumbed this uncertainty was a contributing factor. One simply did not have the strength to think of the concentration camp as constituting the definitive remainder of one's life.

The life story of my other bedmate, Viktor Lebedev, is a typical

example of how paragraph 58 is put to use. His name, the victor, was in itself a bloody irony. He died in a concentration camp in Northern Russia after a life of disillusionment -- a life to which he had tenaciously clung until the last moment of which he would not let go in spite of the fact that it had brought him so many sorrows and disappointments, a life which had placed upon him the duty of work but had denied him the right to a humanly worthy existence and the right to provide food for himself and his beloved ones, to shut out hunger.

His destiny was as grey and as banal as that of most of the prisoners. He was a farm labourer from the Volga district and had, during the course of his work, stolen one sack of potatoes which was to be delivered to the state. For this offence he was pronounced an "enemy of the people" and sentenced to five years of forced labor. The fact that the need and the care for his starving small children drove him to stealing was not considered an extenuating circumstance. He had served three years and had been ill the last five months. I never did learn his innermost thoughts and opinion of the Russian system, for he dared not speak freely even to me, a foreigner. Like the majority of Russians, he had been numbed by his fate. But at the same time, they seemed better to endure the conditions than the rest of us. Their will to resist ~~and their rebellious spirit~~ had been smothered. They merely shrugged their shoulders. What was the point in making difficulties? Such was life, and nothing could be done about it!

That is the way life went on in the hospital barrack. Now and then Maria Ivanovna succeeded in obtaining a copy of Pravda from the guards and then she would read aloud to us. We would then have

lively discussions of the war news.

Naturally, all of us, foreigners and Russians alike were interested in the outcome of the war, for most of the prisoners believed that, with the war ended, they would be released. This opinion was held especially by the Russian soldiers who had been in German concentration camps but had succeeded in escaping. Upon arriving home they had been rewarded by being put in their own country's concentration camps, under the pretext that it could not have been possible for them to escape the Germans and that, consequently, the Germans had sent them back as spies. All were sentenced to 10 to 15 years in accordance with paragraph 58. Generally speaking, they thought that the food, clothes and sanitary conditions were better in the German camps but that the German guards had been more brutal than the Russian.

The 9th of May, 1945, became a general free day for all the working prisoners. They were lined up in the open camp-yard, and those among the sick who had recovered sufficiently to be up, settled down in front of the hospital barrack. From loudspeaker came the announcement that the war had ended, the Germans had been vanquished and the Red Army, the Russians' glorious army, had captured Berlin and now controlled all of Germany. Wild shouts of joy broke out among the prisoners! They wept, embraced one another and yelled: Now we shall be free! As a matter of fact, some of them were actually released a few days later, but these were only minor offenders, such as embezzlers. No political prisoner and hardly any foreigner, with the exception of a few Chinese who had smuggled merchandise across the border and whose sentences were now reduced by a few years was granted amnesty. For the rest of us life went on along the same old trial.

I remember especially well one incident which left a deep impression in our minds and reminded us of the legal position in which we found ourselves. It happened in August.

One evening four prisoners from the forestry brigade and their guards came back to camp carrying a yelling and moaning prisoner on a stretcher. It was a young lad from Moscow by name of Fedor.

Before work is begun in the morning an area of operations is staked out inside of which the workers must remain. To cross the demarcation line of the area is considered an attempt to escape, and the workers are under the surveillance as a rule of two guards and one police dog. This particular day, during the half-hour rest period at noon, Fedor had started picking berries on the ground. He was hungry and in his eagerness to pick as many berries as possible during the short rest period he happened to go outside the staked out area. The guard, who was standing in the vicinity, called out a warning which Fedor however, failed to hear. The guard then fired several shots with his automatic weapon. Fedor, who was stooped over, was hit from behind. The bullets penetrated through the thigh, tore up the stomach and went out through the side. Inasmuch as the day's work had not yet ended he had to lie in this condition, unconscious part of the time, and wait until it was time to end work for the day.

He lay there now, yelling from pain, while Elizaveta Jankevich and Maria Ivanovna did their best to remove his clothes. It would be necessary to operate on him, but since Elizaveta was neither a surgeon nor had any instruments, she could only bandage him in a scanty fashion. The guard tried to get him to sign a statement explaining how the "attempt to escape" had occurred, but he finally

had to sign the prisoner's name himself. All the while, Fedor was shrieking and moaning with pain. He asked for a knife, he begged for one of us to have mercy and put him out of his torments. To be sure, more than one of us felt like complying with his wish, if we had only dared.

The guard immediately ordered the motor-trolley so as to transfer the patient to the central camp and the surgeon there. The trolley arrived on the second evening, twenty-four hours later, but then it was already too late.

This incident left ineradicable traces in our minds and once more reminded us of our insignificance, of how inexpressibly little our lives were worth and that we were unconditionally left to the mercy of our guards.

At the end of August a new contingent of sick prisoners arrived from the camp where I had been before. Harrijo was among them and the joy at seeing one another again was great. He had become quite weak and suffered from dysentery; moreover, he now had a stubborn cough and feared that something was wrong with his lungs. There wasn't much time for chatting to begin with, for I and some 15 other prisoners moved out that very same day and were transferred to one of the labor-brigade barracks. We were to start working on the camp farm the very next day.

Once more the lineup in the morning, the roll call of the names, the march out to the fields and, in the evenings, the drying and mending of torn clothes were resumed. At roll call and elsewhere in camp I was called "shved", the Swede, and in the course of my wandering from camp to camp (all in all I was in 5 different camps, different

and yet so similar) the camp commandant always wondered just why I was there. I had become so accustomed to the fact that no Russian ever believed me when I said that I had been seized during my attempt to get over to England that I did not have the strength to offer an explanation any longer.

Our job consisted of harvesting the potato, cabbage, turnip and carrot crops, a job over which the other prisoners were greatly envious because it offered an opportunity to satisfy one's hunger with vegetables. This camp had a large farm and our brigade, some 25 prisoners, kept fully busy with this assignment up to the first of November. In the early fall, while the weather was good, we found working in the fields pleasant, although we had much to do and our backs ached in the evenings. Conditions became worse when the fall rains come on and transformed the fields into one big pool of mud; then, towards the end of October, the cold settled and a mean north wind swept over the huge fields. During that period we sat out there the entire day separating the tops from the carrots. We had earlier pulled up the carrots and gathered them into large heaps with the tops outermost as protection against the frost. It was a cold job and when it came time to cease work in the evenings we were usually frozen stiff and longed to get back to the barrack. The space around the only fire place would quickly become crowded and small skirmishes over the warmest spots would not infrequently occur. We were like snarling wild animals with fangs bared, ready to fly at each other at the least provocation. The unity among the prisoners was rather bad in many instances, especially among the Russian prisoners. To denounce a fellow-prisoner who may have cheated a bit at work was not an uncommon occurrence and was done for

some sordid gain. Furthermore, many were thievish; the Armenians in particular were specialists at stealing from their fellow-prisoners. Robbery with violence occurred frequently, especially during the dark period of the year. On several occasions prisoners on their way from the stolevaya were beaten to unconsciousness and robbed of their bread ration, under cover of the darkness. In all such cases, tobacco and bread constituted the most ardently desired and coveted items. On rare occasions a robber would get caught and be given some additional penalty, but, as a rule, the guards seemed disinclined to meddle in the "internal affairs" of the prisoners inside the camp, as they put it. However should a prisoner happen to make known aloud his dissatisfaction with the working conditions or the camp, the guards were not long in intervening in the severest manner; a purge would then take place and the dissatisfied prisoners would be transferred. The fact that the Russians were the most thievish and the worse element in the camps is not very surprising. A large number of the Russians who were imprisoned in camps had been sentenced for theft, murder, open robbery, etc. and it stands to reason that such elements hardly improved during their stay in the camps. These camps were hardly institutions for strengthening morals. In addition, there is the sad fact that it was precisely these criminal prisoners who held an advantageous position in the camps. From their ranks the brigade leaders and miscellaneous administrative personnel were recruited, and the remainder of this category more often than not obtained better jobs than the "political prisoners". They were looked upon as less dangerous to the state than, for example, a collective farm laborer who had left agricultural machines out during winter; such a person was regarded as having sabotaged the production plan and thereby branded himself as

an enemy of the people and should naturally be treated accordingly. His crime, then, could consist of nothing more serious than that he was not more familiar with the machines in question and out of sheer ignorance allowed them to break down through corrosion.

Under such conditions it goes without saying that I sought the company of foreign prisoners, being a foreigner myself, and this created a certain feeling of affinity among these Hungarians and Poles who constituted the majority of the foreign prisoners.

Most of the Polish prisoners had taken an active part in the fight against Nazism and had seen their brothers and friends sacrifice their lives for their native country. They had experienced the awful terror and acts of violence of the Nazi executioners in occupied territories. They had lived to see the humiliating partition which Russia and Germany had carried out and had ultimately come to know the "blessings" of communism in the form of prisoner transfers and deportation to distant Russian camps. All this common experience of suffering did its part in creating a certain unity among them. One often saw these Hungarians and Poles helping each other in work as well as in illness and in the harrassments by other prisoners, a helpfulness that, on the other hand, could not be found among the Russians.

The denunciations of fellow-prisoners by the Russians must, of course, to some extent be considered against the background created by camp life, its miserable conditions, the strenuous work, the starvation, the hopelessness and the humiliation -- against a background in which certain advantages could be gained through denunciations, in which each improvement obtained, even if temporary,

implied an extension of life, a better chance to survive imprisonment. Even if many of the prisoners who had long penalties and seemed to have settled their account with life outside our circle also seemed to have resigned themselves, undoubtedly their innermost thoughts and hopes still centered about the idea that this camp life would some day come to an end and a free life begin, and consequently every means was permissible in the struggle for existence. Furthermore, most of the Russians had undoubtedly so completely absorbed this mental atmosphere of denunciations which is so characteristic of the Russian people and community of today that it was also natural that the system should continue to flourish in the camp. A Russian's fear that some other prisoner, knowing he possessed knowledge of the fact that a fellow-prisoner was up to some mischief, would denounce him for possessing that knowledge was generally enough to drive the Russian to denounce the fellow-prisoner. It was consequently, a cause with double effect that created this condition. The inventors of this system of rendering harmless the "enemies of the people" ought to be able to feel proud, since the system has proved so effective that it even manages to penetrate the palisades of the concentration camp.

At the end of October we finished our harvest work and then began the completion of various jobs out in the fields. Thereafter, we had to pack the potatoes in sacks and the carrots and cabbages in cases, and then transport them to the station and load them into railway cars. The greatest part of the products we had harvested was transported inland and only a very small quantity of potatoes and cabbage was kept for the requirements of the camp. We were through with this work the last days in November, and our brigade then broke

up; a few of us were transferred to a forestry brigade, while the others, and among them myself and a few prisoners who had been discharged from the hospital barrack, all in all some 20 prisoners, were transferred to a new camp located approximately 10 kilometers away, Severnaya Poksa.

On the morning of 1 December 1945, before the departure took place, I hurried down to the hospital barrack to take leave of Harrijo. Throughout the period during which I had worked in the field I had kept in touch with Harrijo, who had been ill. I often smuggled carrots and small turnips past the guards, although this was strictly prohibited and severely punished with detention in the isolation barrack. The guards would always feel our pockets and the outside of our coats, but having never found anything hidden on me, they often passed me up with the words: "That is Shved; he never smuggles." In reality I almost always had something with me. I had made a small cloth bag in which I put the carrots and which I attached to the inside of my trousers and, during the searches, kept between my legs; this system worked well and nobody suspected anything. My fellow-prisoners did not know anything about this, either, for I never dared say anything to them. I used to give these carrots to Harrijo and my Jewish friend, Paremka, and they greatly appreciated them.

At one end of the hospital barrack was the ubornaya. Its walls were made of simple wooden boards and on one side of it one of the boards was loose, forming a crack sufficiently large to enable one to pass one's hand through. This is where I used to stand and chat with my friends and hand over the carrots I had brought with me. Moreover, the ubornaya played an important role in the life of the

hospital barrack. This was where those in the barrack who wanted to smoke went to take a surreptitious smoke when Maria Ivanovna was momentarily out of sight. On such occasions, a continuous line would form and the cigarette butt would travel from mouth to mouth until it was so small that it was impossible to hold it. This, furthermore, is where bread rations would be exchanged for the tobacco of some working prisoner who happened to have this item for sale. In addition, many tragedies occurred in this little annex to the hospital barrack. Maria Ivanovna had more than once surprised one of the invalids just as he was handing over his bread ration and received tobacco instead. The tobacco was then always confiscated and the guilty party shoved back in bed without either bread or tobacco and running the risk of being discharged from the underfed and placed in the general group. It even happened a few times that the prisoner on the outside took the bread and then vanished without handing over the tobacco.

Shortly before I visited Harrijo for the last time, all these opportunities for trade relations via the ubornaya were eliminated by the placing of several bolts on both sides of the wall. This was Maria Ivanovna's latest achievement in her private and much-needed tobacco war with the hospitalized prisoners. Though she was the only bright note in their existence most of these prisoners considered her hard and unmerciful for not permitting smoking, but I can understand her. She was aware of the harmful effect of tobacco on had health, especially when it had to be acquired at the cost of a reduction of the already scanty bread ration. I personally witnessed several cases of prisoners daily exchanging for tobacco 200 grams of bread out of a daily ration of 400 grams. I saw these prisoners

get gradually worse, their power of resistance breaking down until they just lay there, too weak to rise. I saw how, in spite of this and by using friends as intermediaries, they continued to get possession of tobacco and continued to smoke in secret at night. I saw them keep this up until they lay there, needing neither bread nor tobacco. As I mentioned before, I personally stopped smoking, although I had previously been a heavy smoker. The fact that I started smoking again after my release is a different story. I am convinced that I would not have come out of concentration camp alive had I kept up smoking and trading away part of my ration to get hold of tobacco.

Well, I stood there, outside the hospital barrack window, talking to Harrijo. It was early in the morning and most of the other prisoners in the barrack slept. I was short of time, the transport was about to leave, and I wanted to remain a long while and talk, for we had so much in common and it seemed so difficult to express anything essential. Unconsciously I felt that this was not an ordinary leave-taking which confronted us. Harrijo had grown weaker and seemed pale and transparent. He complained of his chest and a cough, but he was nevertheless, hopeful and longed to get out and enjoy fresh air. We gave each other our family addresses at home, in the event one of us should, against expectations, survive and be sent home. The idea was, of course, absurd. Harrijo still had 12 years left to serve, and I had known all too many cases of prisoners who had worked off their sentence and still had to continue their life behind the barbed wire enclosure. We promised each other that we would bring greetings to one another's family in case ... Then time came to say goodbye, the gong sounded for

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the assembly up by the gate. I became melancholy and would have wished to clasp his hand in one last hand shake, but this could not be done for the window separated us. Simply a nod and a waving of the hand, that was our farewell -- forever!

WORK AND DILIGENCE BEHIND BARBED WIRE

Severnaya Poksa, the fourth stop in my wandering from camp to camp, was considerably different from the others. Not that it lacked palisades topped with barbed wire and watchtowers equipped with searchlights and machine-guns, the characteristic features of the concentration camps. Nor did it lack the regulation cabbage soup and black bread or the qualifying work norms; no, all this existed on an abundant scale. Here, however, a good half of the prisoners were engaged in work within the camp. A large workshop had been erected in one corner of the camp area containing one department for carpentry work and one for metal work. Outside there was a large store of timber, and just outside the camp stood a saw. Here, within the camp, were manufactured "sanki", a type of timber-sled, casks with a capacity of from 3 cubic meters to 8 or 10 liters; further, doors and windowframes, snow shovels, axhandles, roofing shingles, nails and shoe pegs were made. Rivets and wrought nails in various sizes were the chief products of the metalworking shop. We produced a large number of different articles which apparently went into the open market. It certainly must have been profitable production, inasmuch as the labour was cheap and there were no transportation costs on the materials. We new comers were all placed in this work under the leadership of brigade leader Bandarenko.

Banderenko seemed to have been drawn from one of Rafael Sabatini's pirate novels, rough-hewn, swarthy and scarred; not even the wooden leg, one of the main characteristics of the pirate captain, was missing.

The wooden leg was a souvenir from an attempted German assault by force during the early phase of the war. He had been gashed with shrapnel from a German hand-grenade and left lying on the field for twenty-four hours; as a consequence he developed gangrene and had to sacrifice his leg. Upon his recovery he was detailed as foreman of a department in a carpentry factory. One day he got into an argument with one of the workers which ended up in a violent quarrel. He lost his head and in blind fury grabbed a piece of wood and struck the other. Unfortunately, the other worker was struck by the edge of the board right across the head and dropped dead. For this Banderenko was sentenced to five years of forced labor and at that time had four left. Banderenko was a highly skilled worker but tough and demanding as a work foreman and the Lord have mercy on anyone who became the object of his anger. When he became furious his cane would bounce up and down on the unfortunate person's back, and he who received such a beating was careful not to expose himself to Banderenko's disfavor again. Banderenko, however, in many respects distinguished himself from the other brigade leaders to which we had become accustomed; he always tried to be as just as possible and did not discriminate between foreigners and the other prisoners. Nor was it possible to come to him with slander and denunciations. He who attempted that sort of thing could count on a correction that he would remember. Banderenko, furthermore, enjoyed a certain amount of authority with the camp commandant. It often

happened that when the latter made his inspection round of the workshop, always accompanied by a bodyguard of 4 or 5 guards equipped with automatic weapons, the execution of the various jobs and work norms were discussed and that Bandarenko's arguments commanded attention. He also enjoyed double rations and other privileges.

During the first days I was assigned to a team which manufactured shingle nails. The process consisted of cutting up old steel wire into 30 to 40 centimeter lengths, twining these lengths, and straightening the cords thus obtained with the help of a small hammer; once straightened out, the cords were cut into the desired nail lengths by a specially-made cutting machine. We turned out very good shingle nails which were hammered down to the middle of the nail's length into the singles and the roof and then bent over the shingles. An Austrian and a Bulgarian, among other prisoners, worked with me in the manufacture of nails. The former had been professor of literature in Vienna and the Bulgarian was a well-known and famous surgeon. Both faced 10 years of forced labor, having been arrested shortly after peace had been made, and had only recently arrived at the concentration camp. We talked a great deal, especially the Viennese and I, and I discovered a mutual topic of conversation: books. He was familiar with most Swedish and Norwegian authors and had also read many of their works. The Viennese was very open-hearted and enjoyed talking. But the Bulgarian, on the other hand, was very uncommunicative and difficult to approach; he was soon after transferred to the central Poksa camp to serve as surgeon at the hospital barrack.

Our work was irritatingly monotonous and I was happy when Bandarenko came to me one day and told me that I was to take over

the job of Ivanchenko, who had suffered a severe slash in one foot. My new job consisted of making sanki. There were six of us who were engaged in this activity -- four Russian forestry and farm workers who on some earlier occasion had done this sort of work, Tibor, a young dental technician from Budapest, and myself. As a matter of fact, Tibor became one of my best friends during the latter part of my stay in camp.

The material used for these sleds was straight birch trunks, which we carved into runners, bars and stays. The runners were placed in a long square drum to which we conducted hot steam to make them soft and flexible before forming them. After the steaming we joined the various parts of the sled without using bolts or smith-work, simply by taping and tying them with steam-treated birch switches.

We made 5 or 6 timber sleds which were to be used for the camp's requirements. When we had finished the sleds we were put to work making snow shovels. In making these we use the remnants from the sawing of square beams. Our quota had been set at 4 shovels a day and the extra ration obtained for meeting the quota was 150 grams of bread. No difficulties were encountered in complying with this standard, until one day a few of the prisoners made five shovels, thinking that they would thereby receive an even greater extra ration. Their ration remained unchanged, but ~~the daily work quota was~~ increased for all of us, and it was hard, thereafter, to fill it, especially if one got hold of material that was knotty and difficult to work.

As a matter of fact, the material constantly caused dissension. It was hauled up and deposited outside the workshop and we

had to look for and cut suitable pieces. If we happened to find good material, we would often cut reserve pieces and hide them; hidden pieces would be stolen, and eternal trouble and quarrels would invariably ensue.

Our barrack, situated farthest from the workshop, was built half below ground level. For this reason it was also the warmest of all the barracks. In the winter, when snow covered the ground, only the small windows in the upper portion of the wall were free from snow, otherwise the whole barrack looked like a big heap of snow. There was, however, one disadvantage associated with a warm barrack -- the abundance of bedbugs. These bloodthirsty monsters could be found in any barrack in sufficient numbers to make life miserable for us, but here they constituted an all but unbearable torment. In the evenings, after the little petroleum lamp had been extinguished and one had settled in one's bunk, it was not long before they were in full action.

Bedbugs are most active during the dark hours of the night; they avoid daylight, crawl into fissures and recesses and hide. The upper bunks were always the most exposed, for the little monsters dropped from the ceiling onto the bedclothes, and after about half an hour it was like lying on an anthill. We tried to sleep on the floor, where things weren't as bad as in the upper bunks, but in the end the situation became unbearable. One week after I had arrived, the decision to evacuate the barrack for fumigation was reached. Three days later we took possession of it once more; the situation was satisfactory for a few days, but by and by we noticed how rapidly the bedbugs reproduced, and after only 14 days it was the same torture again. I soon escaped this eternal war against our bloodthirsty

bedmates. One evening, when work had ceased for the day, I hurried towards the barrack. It was extremely cold and everyone crowded to reach the warmth of the barrack. I had arrived at the steps when I was pushed, fell and struck my back against one of the steps. The pain was excruciating and I was unable to get up by myself. I was helped into the barrack and had to go to bed. That night I did not notice the bold visits of the bedbugs, for the ache was such that I simply did not pay any attention to them. The following morning I had great trouble getting up and, with Tibor's help, got over to the hospital barrack. I was examined there by the doctor, Mikhaylovich, and allowed to remain for care. That was one of the last days in December of 1945. And so, once more, I landed in the hospital barrack.

The inhabitants of the prison consisted not only of adults of various ages; even children in their early teens were to be found there. At Severnaya-Poksa there existed a contingent of approximately 80 youths, quartered in a special barrack. They worked in various fields, some in the workshop, others at the saw, and one group took part in forestry work. They represented various age groups from 10 and up and had been sentenced, in general, for the same infractions as the rest of the prisoners. Some came from among the wild children of the large cities, the "besprizorniki" [the uncared-for ones], guilty of robbery and theft; some had been driven to theft through sheer hunger, and others still had been convicted as "political prisoners". These besprizorniki were children and youths who during the war had lost their parents and relatives and been compelled to manage by themselves. They had become hardened by all the tragedies which had occurred in the chaos which accompanied the war. They had been scourged by the spectre of hunger,

starvation and extreme cold; they felt like outcasts and recognized no law but that deriving from the instinct of self-preservation -- whatever aided in survival was permissible. It was indeed a disheartening thing that these "wild" youths dominated and exerted an influence over those among their young friends, who, through the workings of an inclement fate, landed here but who, I dare say, can be said to have been innocent and morally uncorrupted. Even if the latter were not criminals or good material for criminals upon arriving at concentration camps, many of them were full-fledged criminals when they left. One does not wonder at this when one considers how easily children are influenced by one another and by adults. One of the youthful prisoners I remember particularly well was 17 year old Nelli from Murmansk. She worked as a nurse's assistant in the Godina camp.

Her story is typical of the Russian mental climate of suspicion and denunciation. She had already served two of her five years, hence, she had been but fifteen when she was convicted -- and that for a bagatelle. She had attended a dance one evening in Murmansk where a number of English sailors off English ships anchored in the harbor were present. Nelli had danced much with one of the young Englishmen, and when they separated for the evening she said jokingly, "When you return home, may I come along and see how things are in your native country?" That is all that was needed; a denouncer had caught her words and reported her to the NKVD, which pronounced the verdict: five years in concentration camp.

The youngest prisoner, with whom I became well acquainted, was 11 year old Ivanov, also from Murmansk. He became my first genuine teacher in Russian and took his task very seriously. Ivanov

and I met during the happiest period of my camp life, if it is possible to speak of happiness in this regard. He had become ill very soon after his imprisonment and was confined to the hospital barrack at the time I injured my back and was admitted there. When I had recovered sufficiently to be discharged and should return to my job in the workshop, Doctor Mikhaylovich helped me by arranging for me to remain in the sick-bay and to serve as a sort of fatigue-duty man in the kitchen; after a while I even began assisting Doctor Mikhaylovich when he performed post-mortem examinations.

Ivanov and I were allowed to occupy a small room by ourselves; sometimes we received some extra food, all this thanks to Doctor Mikhaylovich, a prisoner himself and one of the finest persons I have ever met. He had previously been a doctor in Leningrad; that is almost all I knew about him, for he was always very reticent about his life. I never saw him spare himself where helping sick prisoners was concerned. He performed miracles without proper instruments and medicine. He was always very silent, a person who had become resigned and expected no more of life. I gathered that he did not believe that he would be released. It was he who succeeded in procuring a book for me, a Russian history of the Roman empire, and with the help of this book Ivanov started teaching me the Russian alphabet. Earlier, I had merely learned to speak Russian more or less tolerably, but now I even learned to write and read Russian. Ivanov was a lively and alert boy; the story of his getting into ~~trouble~~ was the usual one -- hunger. He had stolen a few small pieces of fish from a boat in the harbor and got one year for it.

He was, however, immoderately proud of his native country and especially of the Red army. He intended to become a soldier, of

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course, for no country's soldiers surpassed Russia's in valour and courage! None had performed such noble deeds and endured such hardships as they! Yes, he was a true child of propaganda, little Ivanov was. He asked me to tell him about Sweden; he knew something about it, he believed. He knew about Charles XII and perpetually insisted that the king and his men had always been beaten by the Russians.

"My people is a chosen people who have been victorious in all battles," he, the 11 year old concentration camp prisoner, proudly explained.

For three months -- January, February and March of 1946 -- we were together, Ivanov and I. He also learned a few Swedish words and had, furthermore, picked up some English words from sailors in Murmansk. When we did not practice Russian we helped in the kitchen, took care of the heating and performed odd jobs.

TOWARD SPRING AND FREEDOM

Spring set in once more, my third spring in Russia. My sentence was to expire on 10 September 1946, but I no longer dared count on the possibility of being released. I had encountered entirely too many prisoners who had remained imprisoned several years after the end of their term. I dared to think neither of the future nor of the past. I merely tried to live each day. When memories of Sweden, of my home in Jamtland, threatened to engulf me I attempted to push them to the background. I would have been lost if I had started brooding and longing.

The March days flowed by; I was made a sick-bay attendant and went about simply in trousers, a shirt and an old, white, discarded doctor's coat. The 26th of March was a day like any other day, and I regret not being able to say that I rose in the morning with a feeling that something was about to happen. I worked as usual, ate as usual, and after the evening meal, as usual, I lighted the fire in the stove in the corridor. As I stood on my knees on the dirty floor, Michaylovich walked up to me. He looked so happy that I could not help but stare at him in surprise.

"You are a great and fortunate man," he said and extended his hand toward me.

"Why?" I asked

"You are going to be allowed to return home."

I could not believe it, I dared not believe it.

"That is a poor joke," I stammered forth.

"No, it is true," he replied, now absolutely serious. "You will get some clothes from the sick-bay supplies, and then you are to report to the office in charge of all communications concerning prisoners."

I stood up slowly; I was going to be able to return home. After all, Mikhaylovich had said so. But did I dare believe it? Did I dare trust his information? Home! Memories assailed me. Jamtland in the spring, the slowly melting snow, the first flowers, the hillsides of green birch, the light summer nights...

I shut my eyes and leaned my head against the wall. Then, I pulled myself together and went up to the office. A young girl sat there.

"I congratulate you on your release," said the young Russian woman, who was herself a prisoner with many years of camp before her. She gave me some papers that I must fill out to settle the question of clothes and told me that I would have to ride over to the central camp in Poksa the following day to obtain certain documents. And then I stood once more on the office steps and inhaled deep breaths of fresh air. I felt happy and a bit worried at the same time. So much still remained to be put in order before I could be entirely certain.

That day I did nothing but go around and say goodbye to my friends in camp. All of them were interested and kind; they probably also thought hopefully that soon their turn would come, for this was the first time anyone had ever heard of permission to leave camp being granted someone convicted in accordance with the 84th paragraph. One of the female sick-bay attendants mentioned,

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however, having read in Pravda that a few Russian prisoners in Sweden had been permitted to return home. She assumed it concerned an exchange and that I had been one of those selected.

When the gong sounded in the evening, I sat and talked with Tibor, the dental technician from Budapest, with whom I had been together a great deal. His parting words still ring in my ears.

"Never forget what you have seen in Russia! Tell people what sort of life we prisoners lead." He also gave me a keepsake, a Hungarian field cap, the only thing he had left from his native country.

I found it difficult to sleep that night, I lay awake, disturbed and tossing back and forth in my bed, and on the morning of the 27th of March I rose early and ate before the others. I ran into Mickhaylovich in a corridor; I thanked him for everything and said that I hoped it would soon be his turn. He merely smiled sadly and shrugged his shoulders. Then the guard who was to accompany me to the central camp in Poksa came. Upon arriving there, I was advised that my papers had not yet arrived and that I would have to return to my camp unless they arrived within the next few days. I considered the whole thing cruel and senseless. Why had they made me a promise which apparently they did not intend to keep?

While I waited I would be quartered in what was called "the old barrack", a barrack housing many foreigners beside myself, and for this I was grateful. Russian concentration camps contain representatives of nearly all European and of some Asiatic peoples. There are Norwegians, Finns, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles, Germans, Rumanians, Bulgarians, Austrians, Greeks, Turks,

many Hungarians and Chinese. Yes, there were even people from Bes-sarabia, from Iraq and Iran; well, the Lord only knows from where they all came! I got on best with my Norwegian friends, with Hungarians, Austrians and Poles. It was in them that one found the greatest comradeship and could really trust. The Russians were more unreliable, Mikhaylovich excepted. He was the only genuine friend I had among the Russians.

On the afternoon of the 1st of April a messenger called for me. My papers had at last turned up, and my departure was scheduled for the very next day. Later that evening I received 125 rubles for the ticket (according to the clearing rate of exchange then in force 1 ruble corresponded to 68 ore. The present rate is 129.5.) But I still had no idea of the goal of the journey. Not until morning did I obtain my papers. I noticed that the papers had been issued in a place called Yarensk, but Kotlas was given as the end-station of my journey and according to the instructions I was to report to the local NKVD authorities upon arrival there. I inquired about the location of Kotlas and was informed that it was a city situated where the Vychegda River flows into the north Dvina River in a southerly direction from Arkhangelsk and a good distance inland. I had to be content with this sketchy information -- not that it made me any wiser. Yarensk and Kotlas were to my mind completely unknown places and I had no means of situating them with the help of a map. I would have to make more detailed inquiries when I reached Kotlas. A guard took me to the storekeeper, who gave me the customary 10-day ration for released prisoners, 5 kilos of bread and 600 grams of salted Kamsa, whereupon the guard conducted me to the gate sentry and pointed out the road to the railway station, which, as a

matter of fact, could be seen less than one kilometer away. I walked through the gate alone and unguarded; for the first time in three years I was not under the immediate surveillance of guards armed with automatic weapons. I was free, I was no longer a concentration camp prisoner. Yet, deep inside of me something still made me doubt the freedom ahead. I had to report to the NKVD, didn't I, and the NKVD did not bear the best of reputations.

So, I walked the short distance to the station in Poksa, where I experienced my first contact with the Russian civilian population, and a not altogether pleasant contact. I was shoved out of the ticket-queue by shouting and gesticulating Russians who all crowded to buy tickets. A police officer on duty, standing in the waiting room, soon noticed me. I suppose he thought I looked suspicious. He came up to me and asked to see my documents. I handed these over to him and related my position and explained that I could not manage to get hold of a ticket. He then walked up to the ticket window and ordered a ticket for me which I immediately received.

The train pulled in and a race literally followed to be first on and get a seat. The train, however, was already crowded, so we had to pack together to the best of our ability in the little space that the corridors and the car platforms and steps offered. I had to spend the first four hours of the journey down to a station called Konosha, the situation improved a little. There I had to change trains and transferred to the Arkhangelsk - Moscow line; there were fewer passengers, and conductors supervised the cars. I managed to find a seat in a compartment, and no one there took any particular notice of me, in spite of my short hair and the typical camp outfit I wore. The population up in this area was much

too accustomed to prisoners (concentration camps were thickly scattered all along the railway) to pay attention to them.

Shortly after our departure from Konosha passport control took place. Two NKVD officials passed from car to car and examined the passengers' passports -- all Russian citizens are required to carry a passport in order to be able to travel between different places. I could not help feeling as though I sat on pins and needles throughout the whole procedure, especially when my turn came and I had surrendered my documents. All went well, however; the official read through my papers and then fastened a scrutinizing eye on me, whereupon he returned my documents and went on to the next passenger. I heaved a sigh of relief, but I was to experience a few times more this nerve-racking situation before reaching ^{the} final destination. In Vologda a change of trains again took place, and the journey continued in a northeasterly direction toward Kotlas and the Dvina River. The train travelled slowly, at every station a long halt was made (for twenty-four hours in Vologda) and only after three and a half days and nights did we reach Kotlas. Shortly before arriving, we rode past a whole town of barracks surrounded by barbed wire. Upon inquiring I was informed that it was a camp for German war prisoners.

I asked a patrolling police officer in Kotlas where Yarensk was situated but he did not know. After having examined my documents he advised me to look up the passport division of the NKVD in town, where I would surely be able to obtain the information. I walked the long distance through practically the entire town to the passport division. Having surveyed the map, the officials informed me that I must continue by train to a point called Mechog,

and from there to Yarensk there was still a good distance. I returned to the station where I had to wait until the following morning for the train to leave. Finally, on the morning of April 7th I arrived at Mechog and started out on my 27 kilometer-long march toward Yarensk. The road which connected the two points was usable only in winter and all transportation over it was done with horse-drawn vehicles. The march was long and tiresome; the night frost helped to make it fairly easy in the morning, but as the sun gradually climbed in the sky the road thawed and became more and more difficult, and by evening there was nothing but snow slush, which my prison shoes (sandals made of sliced auto-tires) could not keep out. Furthermore, I was no longer accustomed to walking so far, having come straight from the sick-bay and the long and tiresome railway journey, too, had sapped my strength. In addition, my food ration was beginning to run out. I shouted to all passing vehicles to be allowed to ride along, but no one took any notice of me. When I ventured up to some of the small farms at the edge of the woods, I found only locked doors. The only person to whom I really got to speak to was a smith who worked in a kolkhoz smithy immediately outside Yarensk. He invited me to have sauerkraut and frozen blood pudding. Had he possessed better food, he would have offered it to me. He had spent five years in a concentration camp himself.

The police station in Yarensk was closed when I arrived, but I succeeded in locating a room at five rubles per night. The following day was Sunday, so it was not until Monday that I was able to go to the police and claim my passport -- not a regular passport valid for travelling between different countries, but one that entitled me to remain in the Lenski district, where Yarensk was located.

Furthermore, I was to report to the police once a month. That I did not, under such conditions, contemplate taking myself out of Russia on my own was, then, rather natural. I had no desire to land in a camp once more. I understood that my only means of returning to Sweden rested with the Swedish legation in Moscow, and I had every intention of resorting to it as soon as possible.

My first concern then, however, was to find employment, which would enable me to subsist. At the police station I had been advised to seek work on a kolkhoz outside the city, and I immediately started for it.

I encountered a young woman from whom I sought directions. She asked me if I intended to seek work and advised me instead to go to a government transient camp in the vicinity where the food ration would be more generous. In Russia the first thing one inquires about when looking for work are how is the food and how large an allotment of provisions does one receive? The important thing is that one's money suffices to pay for the food ration to which one is entitled. It goes without saying that the need for money exists, especially in view of the fact that the rations allotted to one are inadequate. Should one try, however, to compensate for this insufficiency by resorting to the lawful "black market", one would require a salary that only persons in higher positions receive, or else one would have to be a stakhanovite who can reach salary levels many times over that of an ordinary worker. Very little can be purchased at the prices which can be met by the "common mortal".

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AS COMMON LABORER FOR THE RUSSIAN STATE

I followed the woman's advice and made my way to the government lumber camp, Zapadnaya Varenga, where I was hired and, to begin with, put to work in the repair shop, in spite of the fact that the "nachal'nik," the supervisor of the settlement, was not present at the time. Thus, my term as laborer for the Russian State began.

Zapadnaya Varenga was situated by the river Vychegda, which has its source in the Komi region and flows into the north Dvina at Kotlas. At this point the river is fairly wide, approximately 800 meters, and here logs are floated, separated and bundled throughout the summer at the rate of about 100,000 cubic meters each season. On account of the floating, the river had been divided into two by means of great timbers which kept the logs on one side, leaving the outside unobstructed for the traffic of freight and passenger ships and the numerous and large bundles of timber coming from Komi on their way to Arkhangelsk and out to sea. There was at this point throughout the summer a very heavy traffic, partly due to the lack of main roads. Here the boats had to replace what we in Sweden call touring cars and buses. The arrival of the first boat of the season and the ensuing termination of the six-month long isolation caused by winter was always a great event.

There were ~~approximately~~ 120 of us registered workers at Zapadnaya Varenga, and we all had a contract with our employer, the State. The contract could not be broken. The minimum term of employment was one year and that is what I managed to obtain. During the season this labor force was not sufficient to handle all the tasks that had to be carried out; laborers had to be recruited from nearby kolkhozes. This conscription of labor force was carried out

by higher authority and consisted of requesting the various kolkhozes to place at the disposal of the State so and so many workers for a definite length of time usually for a period of 3 to 5 months, and the workers had to report to such and such a work place. Then it was up to the kolkhoz to select those who were to be sent; any male or female of 14 or 15 up to 50 or 55 was eligible. The refusal to perform the work assigned was subject to suitable punishment and could lead to forced labor in work camps. The same situation existed in winter, when labor power was needed in connection with lumber-cutting. Many kolkhozes suffered seriously by these constant requisitions, because during the better part of each year they were robbed of their best labor power.

Zapadnaya Yarenga was typical of most government operated floating or lumbering settlements. It was situated on a steep river bank -- some ten grey log barracks for the worker, an office building, a warehouse and a store, a collective mess hall a repair shop, a temporary bakery and one small cabin for the camp supervisor and his family. Such was the camp in its entirety. Each family had one room at its disposal and shared one kitchen with four families. There were iron stove in the rooms to warm them against the cold. The barracks for unmarried men consisted of two rooms each, in which were housed just as many as the space permitted. The room in which I lived held 12 beds; for a while, however, the room was occupied in shifts, one shift sleeping in the daytime and the other at night. All told 30 of us shared the room. That might give food for thought for us here at home who complain over the housing shortage. This situation, furthermore, was not confined to just this place; it was typical of all work places and small

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settlements anywhere in Russia.

During the early part of my term at Zapadnaya Yarenga I worked in the repair shop, where there was always much to do in the spring. The towboats had to be inspected, the engines overhauled, cablelocks, pegs and boat hooks had to be smithed; hence, the period before the timber bundling could begin at the end of May was quite hectic. After that, only a few men remained in the workshop; the rest participated in the floating. During the first summer I worked on the floating up the Yarenga river, which flows into the Vychegda and from where most of the timber came; the second summer saw me occupied with bundling. During the intervening winter I was employed in the smithy and the repair shop. During the season from May to October our main occupation was the floating, sorting and bundling of the timber which came down stream and continued to the sawmills at Arkhangelsk. In winter when there was less to do in that field, a large portion of the labor force was released from these duties and transferred to lumber-cutting, while the remainder carried out the preparatory work necessary for the floating season. One usually worked 8 hours a day during the winter, but during the summer a two-shift system of 12 hours per day per shift was applied.

Any joy in one's work could not be discovered among the workers. Of course, the great majority of them were not voluntarily employed workers, up to fifty percent having been impressed into the camps from the kolkhozes without any consideration for individual wishes. The good of the State came before that of the people.

When the ice broke up in the beginning of May the river rose up to 7 meters above its normal level, and because the surrounding country was level everywhere, inundation occurred. We constantly went about wet far up on the legs. Only a minority owned regular rubber boots, and when now and then we saw someone with high American boots we knew that he was either a supervisor or a foreman. I wore no shoes at all from June until the latter part of September, at which time I obtained the authorization one had to have in order to be allowed to buy any footwear.

Footwear constituted a serious problem in Russia. Even before the war the demand for shoes far surpassed the shoe-factory production. During the war many factories were destroyed and a crying want for shoes arose. Strict rationing measures were resorted to in this situation. Each work place was allotted a certain number of pairs of shoes or boots, and then it rested with the nachal'nik to distribute these among the workers in the place. He would issue an authorization which entitled one to purchase, for instance, one pair of replacement boots at the established government price of 75 rubles. These persons who were allotted a pair one year had to do without the following, unless they succeeded in getting hold of a pair on the so-called "free market". The price on the "free market" fluctuated around 500 to 600 rubles, which represented several months' work. These free markets make a story in itself. They exist in all cities and larger settlements and constitute a point of focus for the population. They are entirely legal but correspond to what we call the black market. Such a market consists of long wooden tables put up in some cobblestone market place in the center of the community, where the owners of the stands

have to pay rent to the authorities, which authorities even supervise the market. Many people, however, never obtain permission to carry on trade. They move about with their wares among the crowd, always keeping a sharp lookout for the police. The most varied products are offered for sale here. Behind the tables the peasant-women line up the surplus of the produce from their small gardens. One can find for sale carrots, potatoes, onions, berries, eggs, fish and milk and on some occasions even meat. Even sewing needles, buttons, razor blades, small pieces of cloth, empty sacks, bottles and tin cans can be found; all these things have a certain value on the Russian markets. But everything is always very expensive. For instance, in the summer milk commands a price of 7 to 8 rubles per liter, while, during the winter, this price jumps to 15 to 20 rubles and box of matches or a copy of the four-page Pravda costs 3 rubles.. It is not the fervent desire to read that determines this price but the usefulness of the paper for making cigarette-paper. Upon returning to one's place of work after a visit to the "narynok" [market], one would always engage in a lively discussion of it. Everyone was interested in what was for sale and how much the different items cost. The discipline in our place of work was very strict -- as it is, for that matter, in all work places in Russia.

WORK, HOME LIFE AND PASTIMES

We were never able to "celebrate" on account of the weather. Nor was anyone allowed to stay away from work one day "without valid reason", among the valid reasons were included, for instance a call on the authorities in Yarensk, which one could not undertake, furthermore, without a pass from the camp supervisor. In case of illness one had to present a doctor's certificate. Failure to report to work without having obtained a certificate was punishable. The guilty party had to appear before the so-called "people's court" in Yarensk, where a man, appointed by the party, carried out the accusing and the sentencing. The usual penalty consisted of from 5 to 8 months forced labor beyond the term of the contract (this even applied to the impressed workers) with a 25 percent reduction in pay. If one repeated the offense the penalty was more severe -- usually 3 to 4 months in a concentration camp -- and the law prescribed a maximum of up to five years. Some workers who were not well liked by the foremen were even punished for tardy arrival. The decisions in this connection were, however, arbitrary. For instance, the supervisor of our camp had a nephew in the camp, who often took a day off without reason and yet was never punished.

It was important to be on good terms with the foremen, for one was completely at their mercy. It was they who decided what sort of work one had to perform and to which "wage group" one should belong. I can give as an example the case of a woman who worked as charwoman in the barracks and in the office; for this work she received a bread ration of 400 grams a day. Meanwhile, those who worked at sorting the logs obtained 1 kilo per day, and for this reason she requested to be transferred to the heavier and more wearing

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sorting work. The foreman refused to allow the transfer on the grounds that it was he who decided what sort of work she was to do, and that was to be the end of it. The next day she went on strike in her cleaning work, with the result that she was reported to the people's court and sentenced to four months of forced labor in one of the regular concentration camps.

A very complicated and arbitrary wage system is applied in Russia, a system in which the foremen can exert their influence as they please. We were divided into seven wage groups with the seventh "rasryad" [group] as it was called, as the highest. All work is standardized on a quota basis and in order to obtain a particular wage one had to meet one's quota at least one hundred percent. Where sorting and bundling work are concerned the quota was established on a collective basis, applying to the shift as a whole, and the foreman determined each worker's wage group. For this reason one never knew beforehand how much one was earning. It was possible for a worker to belong to the highest salary group during one pay period and then drop down to group 5, 3 or 4 the next period. Just as many women as men worked, but as a rule the women were placed in the lower groups, in spite of all the talk about the equal-wage principle. Furthermore, a system of bonus or premium distribution was applied with respect to the workers who proved themselves very good workers, the so-called stakhanovites. The premiums consisted of money as well as of extra rations of food, cigarettes and vodka. As an incentive to competition between two shifts, liquor (which we could not get then without the work supervisor's permission) and increased tobacco rations were offered as prizes. These competitions, however, were not particularly popular.

Our average income amounted to between 250 and 300 rubles a month, while the foremen and some stakhanovites reached levels of income two and three times as high. This situation created dissatisfaction; it may not have been openly voiced, but all the same it reflected itself in the tempo of work. Generally speaking, one got the impression that the workers, or rather the work tempo, was dependent on the foremen's ability to incite to work. I witnessed a clear example of this one time when the foreman of our shift was absent two days because of illness and we had to work on our own. Prior to that we had succeeded more or less in meeting our quota, but on this occasion the work we accomplished amounted only to slightly over 60 percent of our earlier results. Those who were working on sorting the logs interrupted their work repeatedly for a smoke, and the general opinion was that there was no reason for working oneself to death, since the boss was not present. Why begrudge ourselves some rest; yet, we were doing piecework.

Our wages were paid out twice a month, minus deductions for the rent and payment for the mattress and the blanket with which the government supplied us. Tax deductions from my wages amounted to 10 percent, a considerably smaller deduction than that to which the Russians were subjected. As a foreigner there were certain taxes which I escaped. In addition, we were obliged to set aside each month 10 percent of our wages for the purchase of government bonds. This was supposedly on a voluntary basis, but if one refused to do it, one was called in to the nachalnik, who would ~~let his~~ eloquence flow out over the recalcitrant one to convince him of the usefulness of this forced savings. If one persisted in refusing to purchase bonds, one could count on being exposed to harassments in the form

of more disagreeable work, and one was regarded in a poor light by the foremen.

One's wages did not permit a variety of purchases; food consumed most of them. Since I was unmarried, I took my meals in the stolovaya; in fact, the camp supervisor preferred that everyone eat there. The women who stayed home and cooked did not of course draw any pay. To begin with they were entitled only to half rations but after the 1st of October 1946 none at all if they could not produce a doctor's certificate attesting that they were incapable of work. By this method the women were forced into production in order that the five-year plan might be realized. In the stolovaya, which placed before us plates broken around the edges, metal bowls made from American preserve-tins, and wooden spoons, we each paid 6 to 8 rubles a day for meals. The meals served there were not sumptuous, but at least they were better than what I was accustomed to in concentration camp. In the morning soup was served; in the evening soup and porridge and sometimes a little fried fish or potatoes. Each person bought his own bread from a shop, which was open in the morning and in the evening. Sometimes the shop was open in the middle of the day, but it was mainly officials who were then able to go and get their supplies. They always had an opportunity to get hold of better goods than the workers, for they were friends with the party-appointed shopkeeper.

At first the bread ration was one kilo per day, always newly-baked but black and unappetizing. In addition, we were entitled to monthly allowances of 750 grams of sugar, 400 grams of fat (usually consisting of oil extracted from sunflower seeds); 1.8 kilo of meat or fish (there was seldom any meat) 2.5 kilo of barley-grain or soya

and 200 grams of soap. The latter item was generally omitted. Furthermore, we received two boxes of matches a month. In September 1946 a vast food inventory was made, whereupon the bread rations gradually dropped to 400-600 grams a day and the sugar to 400 grams a month.

At that time the government-established prices were 4.20 rubles per kilo for bread, 32 rubles for meat, 8 to 20 rubles for fish, 72 rubles for butter, 25 rubles for oil, 15 rubles for sugar and 4.5 rubles for grain. We seldom drew our butter and soap rations for own account; we used to sell such items to those who were better able to afford them. Foremen, for example, earned three times as much as workers. Clothing articles that could be purchased at government-established prices were likewise sold for 5 to 10 times as much as they had cost, or else they were exchanged in the kolkhoz for potatoes or other products.

The clothing situation was a grim one for everyone. Everything was sold on the presentation of an "order", which was also issued as a sort of work bonus. For instance, when I had filled my work quota and earned 300 rubles, I would receive an "order" amounting to 30 rubles, that is, 10 percent. This "order", however, was only valid for two months after the date of issue. The government-fixed price for a suit was 250 rubles, but could only be sold against an "order". There had been suits for sale, but during the period I worked in the camp I never saw any. Now and then, however, a few bundles of cotton cloth of inferior quality would arrive, and then the women would stand in line for several hours to get hold of a small piece at the price of 4 rubles per meter. Cigarettes and sewing-thread were also sold against these orders. If one needed

anything new in way of clothing, he had to resort to the free market, the black market permitted by the State. That market was located in a spot which had actually been let to the farmers of the kolkhoz. Furthermore, there were certain stores which had the right to sell free suits. Where free market clothing was handled one had to pay up to 500 rubles for a ready-made suit of poor quality and about 800 rubles for military coats, an important item. I never could afford to buy a suit, but on one occasion I paid 200 rubles for a pair of work trousers and 100 rubles for a sport cap.

It was natural that under such conditions everyone was poorly dressed, even when he wore his best clothes on festive occasions. The women always wore skirts and blouses which they had sewn themselves. On their heads they wore scarves. The men came in their old uniforms and with a number of medals pinned to their chest. I got the impression that Russian soldiers never had less than 3 to 4 medals. The parties were never particularly elevating, for festivity and drunkenness were one and the same thing. National festival days and alcoholic spirits always walked hand in hand.

When the October revolution was celebrated it cost us each 52 rubles to participate, but then everyone was entitled to 300 grams of vodka and 100 grams of 96-percent alcohol. The festivities started with a propaganda speech made by a party member. He would tell about the revolution, about the annihilation of the capitalistic sweatshops, about the developments which followed, and about the significance of the 5-year plans in raising the standard of living. Next came the entertainment put on by some travelling troupe, which would immoderately make fun of Hitler and his executioners but which even dealt with serious matters, such as the contribution of the

komsomol youths to a free and happy Soviet community. Most of it, however, contained much propaganda but was eagerly devoured by all. The settlement's population was not spoiled with too much entertainment and everyone was grateful for the change from the gloominess of everyday life. After the speech and the entertainment the meal began and everyone drank copiously, whereupon the party concluded with waltzes and quadrilles as long as one could keep it up. This was the usual type of celebration on national festival days.

PRIVATE ROOM IN THE KOLKHOZ OF PERVOYE MAYA

When I had become somewhat more accustomed to life in the camp, like the rest of the workers I began scouting around the country side to find extra food to supplement the meager rations. Most of the time I went to a kolkhoz a few kilometers away and there exchanged sugar and soap for potatoes and other edibles. I met an elderly woman there, Anna Ivanovna, who lived together with her young daughter in the kolkhoz office building. There was an unoccupied room in the office building which I wanted to rent, partly to have greater opportunity to get hold of various products through exchange and partly to escape camp life and the comrades. Many of the latter stole anything on which they could get their hands; you did not dare lay down a piece of bread, for instance, for it would always have disappeared when you wanted to eat it. For these reasons I started to talk to Anna Ivanovna and begged her to speak to the kolkhoz leader and ask him if I could not rent the empty room. She promised to do this.

I was in luck, the "predsedatel" (chief) of the kolkhoz permitted me to live in the unoccupied room. I immediately thought that life was easier to live when I could sometimes enjoy the luxury of being alone. For the first time since I arrived in Russia I was spared from barrack life, and it felt indescribably good. The walk every morning and evening of approximately five kilometers between the lumber camp and the kolkhoz was merely refreshing. I was once more living in a village, as I had in the past at home in Jamtland. But I soon discovered the immense difference which exists between a free Swedish farmer and his collectivized colleague in Russia.

Like nearly all kolkhozes this one, too, bore a revolutionary name. It was called Pervoye Maya -- the First of May -- and was considered one of the best in the area. The village was not particularly large, yet close to fifty families lived crowded together in the small grey houses. As dwelling places these houses were not much to boast about. No painter's brush had ever touched these walls, and no renovation or repair work had been performed since collectivization. The houses were constructed of logs and were as a rule built adjacent to the cow shed, was located on the side of the house or that it constituted the ground floor with the living quarters above it. No family, no matter how large, had more than one room, and to try to keep that room in order was naturally a hopeless undertaking. The furnishings were very simple. The greatest portion of the space was taken up by the stove, which was somewhat like a Swedish clap-bread oven. The household utensils consisted of primitive clay vessels, and the main dish, the eternal soup, was cooked in the morning and put in the oven to keep warm. The women had time

to cook only once a day, but, in addition, they baked almost every day.

No other household work was carried on and necessity had simplified what little there was to do as much as possible. For instance, making the bed did not require much time. All there was to do was to shake the mattress a bit in the common sleeping place and to straighten the blanket or skin. One treasure, however, could be found in most homes, the classic samovar. Unfortunately only water could now be boiled in it, for there no longer existed any tea, and everyone deeply regretted this fact.

Anna Ivanovna, whose father had once been an independent farmer and apparently fairly well situated, was a bitter and prematurely aged woman whom life had treated roughly. We often sat and talked in the evenings and then she willingly told of how things had been once upon a time. She blamed her hard life and the hard life of her friends upon the system, that hateful system, about which she considered herself as incapable of doing anything as did her fellow-sufferers.

"What is there to do?" she sighed and shrugged her shoulders in resignation. "One can only give in to one's fate and try to struggle on."

Anna was only 35 years old but she looked 20 years older, and when she had told of her life present-day in Russia it seemed quite natural that her face was so furrowed and her hair so gray. ~~She and~~ her sister had lived with their father who owned his own farm and 3 or 4 cows and horses. Then collectivism was introduced, supposedly on a voluntary basis the first year; but the following year, 1931,

Russia suffered a serious famine. People died like flies, and the State requisitioned all the grain it could get hold of. House-searches were the order of the day and riots sometimes occurred. During one of the riots Anna's father was killed. The State then confiscated the entire farm, but the two sisters were allowed to retain one cow on the condition that they were willing to continue to work on the collective farm. Anna married a farmer, but it soon proved impossible for them to manage, for her husband was constantly impressed into forestry work from the beginning of October until the end of May. They sold their house and he became employed under contract in a lumber camp, while she went to work in a brickyard. They kept this up until the war started.

Anna's husband was called up in the fall of 1941 and shortly thereafter Anna was notified that he had been killed. She was thus left alone with four children, three girls and one boy. The two oldest girls died from diphtheria and together with little Nadya and her son Sergey, Anna turned to collective farming. In the spring of 1944, at the age of 14, Sergey was picked for an emergency training program for woodworkers in Arkhagelsk. He and his friends were continually hungry for they were entitled only to the smallest rations as long as their training lasted. Everyone who did not engage in direct production work received a smaller ration. One day they asked for permission to go home for a short while (Sergey and his friends from the same village). They had in mind to get hold of some potatoes and other edibles on the collective farm. They did not obtain permission but went home nevertheless; they were fetched back by the NKVD. They were sentenced to five years in concentration camp, where Sergey died after a short while. His friends were granted amnesty on armistice day.

Anna now lived alone with her daughter Nadya and in order to procure the necessary food, she took care of the 60 sheep on the collective farm. It was by no means easy work, especially in January of 1947, when the temperature dropped to fifty degrees below zero and stubbornly remained there. If one ventured out on the roads, one constantly encountered people with frost-bitten cheeks and nose, and a biting wind greatly contributed to the general discomfort. Indoors it was possible to keep fairly warm by crowding around the stove, but it was worse for the animals. Anna felt a constant anguish over her sheep. She alone was responsible for them, and she knew that she would have to pay dearly if anything happened to them. They were kept in a dilapidated, ramshackle house, in and out of which the wind whistled, and in vain she asked the head of the collective farm that it be repaired. But he, the almighty "predsedatel" Alexey, had other things to listen to than a woman's nagging about her sheep. She would have to manage them best she could. In fact, she was not tending them properly, he stated harshly, they were thin and wretched. She would have to see to it that things changed.

Anna sat and cried bitterly in the evenings. She found it difficult to digest Alexey's hard words. He knew as well as she that the fodder allotment was entirely too scanty to enable the sheep to put on weight. She compared her life of hard work with the comfortable existence Alexey was leading. While she was paid for fifteen workdays per month in return for her constant wear and tear, Alexey received forty-five days' remuneration for all the work he did. He belonged to the management and had a production chief and a few work leaders under him. He was a party member and could

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afford the rural edition of Pravda; he stood sky-high over the ordinary kolkhoz members and his will was law. She did not stand a chance against him. When fifteen sheep froze to death in the severe cold, he dismissed her from her work and even took away from her the one sheep that belonged to her, her beloved, tenderly cherished sheep, on which she had placed so much importance.

In all kolkhoze the managers were omnipotent and woe betide him who brought their disfavour upon himself! Frequently those who held the power were not farmers originally and had no conception of how to manage a farm; needless to say, waste and neglect spread to most kolkhozes.

Nor did those who dwelled on the farms do much to improve the situation. Why should they be concerned over the fact that the earth yields poor crops, that the tools are left out of doors and ruined in winter, that the beasts are poorly cared for? "Today I drive the horse, tomorrow someone else. Why should I care a fig for the horse." That was the way the kolkhoz farmers reasoned amongst themselves; but when it concerned the small patch of garden to which they were entitled, their tune changed. They took very good care of it in order that it might produce as much as possible, and they did not lack interest in this matter. But it did not bother them a bit to see the manure of the last four years left along the cowpath. Since the predsdatel did not know any better, since he did not give the order to move it out into the fields, they did not care about it. Everybody thought, why work hard and raise fine crops when one is not allowed to derive any pleasure from them anyway. The State confiscated most of it, while the kolkhoz farmers eternally had to struggle with the feeling of being starved. Everyone was indifferent and cared little about most things.

Most of them who previously had been independent farmers went about grieving over the fact that they had lost their soil. Many of them came all the way from the Ukraine; they had been deported to this area wearing the same light summer-clothes they had worn there. They had been separated from wife and children and constantly longed to return home, so one can imagine how interested they were in the work in Pervoye Maya. No, that a kolkhoz farmer is interested in his work is the thing one can claim least of all. He drags himself through his existence without hope or belief in

the future. Each day brings enough difficulties, and the only thing he really thinks about is to quiet his hunger to some degree. And yet, there is no one who even dreams of trying to bring about a change in the system. The dull discontentment which ferments among the population is the only form of revolt one is able to and dares to mobilize.

"But why don't you do something?" I used to ask my friends at Pervoye Maya. "Why do you put up with this situation?"

"Well, to be sure, it is miserable, but what can one do?" everyone retorted. "Here we go about toiling Sundays and week-days alike, and still we starve. We were foolish enough to participate, ourselves, in carrying out this system of which we shall never be rid. How then are we to bring about a change?" And this statement would be followed by that shrug of the shoulders which is typical of the Russian people.

I lived in the kolkhoz close to one year. I experienced the Russian farmer's year-long heavy labor and I came to be on fairly good footing with many of the inhabitants, even though they never were able to quite overcome their deep-rooted suspiciousness, that inclination to see a spy and a denouncer in every person who tries to speak confidentially with them. I do not blame them. I witnessed enough of the gruesome denunciation system to be able to understand them. In many cases the suspiciousness is exceedingly well-grounded. I was seldom able to lure a kolkhoz member into lengthier discussion of the system or to any statements beyond the resigned "What is the use?" But, on the other hand, I had the opportunity to study thoroughly the daily life during the different

seasons of the year.

I participated in spring sowing and harvest. I helped carry leaf-sheaves into the woods to the half starving cows in the fall, like everyone else I was out picking mushrooms everytime I had a free moment. I endured cold throughout the severe winter and rejoiced together with the kolkhoz people over the first thaw of the snow. When that time came I also had a purely personal cause for rejoicing, but about which I still dared not talk to anyone: it began to look as though I would be permitted to return to Sweden.

While waiting, I continued to work in the lumber camp where I was still employed. Now and then I would forge a knife or some other tool for some kolkhoz farmer. That sort of work paid rather well, for a knife was worth 70 to 80 rubles, and it was easy for me to get hold of the material when I worked in the repair shop of the lumber camp.

The tool and machine situation constituted a sad story in Pervoye Maya, as it did in all other kolkhozes. There was one mowing machine and one tractor, purchased before the war, but no one bothered to take care of them. During the winters they stood out of doors covered with snow and rapidly became ruined. All milking was done by hand, and the grain and hay were mowed partly by hand. There existed, however, a combination smithy and repair shop in the kolkhoz. It was located in the ~~little many-domed church~~ situated in the middle of the village.

Pervoye Maya was, nevertheless, one of the best managed kolkhozes in the area and the one which produced the largest yields. The kolkhoz member is paid in kind; sometimes he may get some money in the event

the crop happened to be particularly fine and a surplus is disposed of on the free market after the State had collected its share. Supposedly, the State paid for the goods delivered, but the payments made constituted only a fraction of the value of the products.

As an example, mention can be made of the fact that for delivered milk the price of 17 kopeks per liter was paid, while milk sold on the free market commanded a price of 8 to 12 rubles in the summer and up to 20 rubles in the winter. Wages were based on the number of workdays each one had performed, but by this one should not understand a day of hard work to mean the same thing as a "workday" from the wage standpoint. As I mentioned before, Anna Ivanovna was remunerated for fifteen days of work, although she had to tend her sheep every day and her work required the better parts of the day. In order to manage for herself and her little daughter, she supplemented her earnings by cleaning the administration building and doing odd jobs. The manager, Alexey, on the other hand, drew salary for forty-five days, in spite of the fact that the results produced by his efforts each month certainly did not correspond to many days of effective work. The contention was that he and the others belonging to the management had been appointed by the kolkhoz farmers themselves; but the selection was directed solely by the Communist party. The management must consist of party members exclusively, and in many places it is difficult enough to appoint the kolkhoz manager from the ranks of the village's own farmers, considering the fact that the Communist Party membership in Russia represents about 3 percent of the population.

To return to the salaries in the kolkhoz. Each worker received (while I was there) 500 grams of undried grain, 600 grams of potato, 600 grams of hay and 200 grams of straw for every work-day. It is to be noted that the above amounts are much higher than those which generally applied in kolkhozes in this area.

The allotment of meat was as small as that received by other workers, but when there was a surplus one could buy a kilo or two in addition to one's ration for 10 - 15 rubles per kilo. The milk was delivered to the dairy each day and went directly to the State. Only families with children could keep some for themselves one half liter a day per child, but they had to pay 3 rubles per liter. The amounts of the purchases were kept in books and deducted from the regular earnings from work.

The predsdatel Alexe and his comrades in the management did not, of course, live under such difficult conditions. They had an abundance of opportunities to procure what they needed and they made the most of these opportunities. After all, they were the ones who took care of all controlling, and it was especially at slaughter time that they looked out for themselves. But if they happened to catch some other member of the kolkhoz helping himself to a few kilos of potatoes for his own use, the guilty party would be severely punished. Four or five years in concentration camp was not an uncommon sentence for such a "crime".

It is natural that under such condition the thought of food should become central to every person's life. I have already mentioned the picking of mushrooms in the fall; all the

women had developed into expert connoisseurs of mushrooms. After being picked, the mushroom was left to dry, and during the winter it added a greatly appreciated flavor to the otherwise flat tasting soup. The soup was always served in a large bowl which was placed in the middle of the table so that everyone could help himself. All the members of the family ate the soup out of this bowl with the help of wooden spoons. If a guest was present he, too, would be given a wooden spoon and helped himself out of the common bowl.

Some households also tried the permissible resort of keeping one cow for private use, but they were nearly always doomed to fail. The hay to which they were entitled was not sufficient, and the only thing left to feed the animals was leaves. It was however, prohibited to touch the trees which grew in the kolkhos, hence, one had to make long excursions into the woods. On the other hand, it was permissible to gather up hay spilled on the roads, and women and children were constantly seen out on this errand. Even if one succeeded in keeping the cow alive, however, and managed to get milk from her, one's profit was not large, for the State requisitioned 270 kilos of milk with a fat content of 3.9 percent from every cow; there never was much left above that, for the yield was very meager. The farmer who could not deliver the stipulated quantity was punished in the form of fines or else was deprived of his cow.

I recall a comment made by an outspoken Pole at the lumber camp during a noontime rest period. It was occasioned by an otherwise tragic story. In the summer of 1946, ~~the~~ "The Red Star" Kolkhos suffered from a catastrophic failure of the crop. The

soil there had a high sand content and was particularly subject to severe drought that prevailed there. The kolkhoz in question yielded a hay crop only about one-third as large as normal, and the allotment of hay to the workers, for this reason, was practically nil. One of the families in this kolkhoz owned one cow, which was then given only leaf-sheaves on which to feed. One morning in the spring of 1947, shortly before the cows were to be let out to graze, the old peasant woman who owned the cow found her lying dead in her stall. The cow had for a long time been lying down, unable to rise because of underfeeding. That night, however, she had managed to rise, and for some reason, the rope to which she was attached had got caught, whereupon the cow had slipped, remained hanging and strangled. The incident was told everywhere and it was on such an occasion that the Pole commented: "The cow was smarter than people thought, she saw the handwriting on the wall and realized that the best solution was to hang herself."

To be just, it must be admitted that even a few persons outside the management proper managed to get along fairly well. To these few Anne Petrovna belonged; she was the predsdatel's clerk and his subordinate. Anne has a room for herself and her two young children in the same house as I. She was younger than her namesake, Anna Ivanovna, more robust, and she had a ravenous appetite for life and vodka. Anna Petrovna, who was 26 years of age, was a war widow and received from the State 125 rubles a month for each child. She used to spend the money on vodka, but the vodka was expensive and not even the subsidy received for her children sufficed.

However, everybody whose claims were not too great could have his fill of the popular beverage during the celebration on the 7th and 8th of November in memory of the October Revolution. A great festival then took place in the office building, where the red banner floated in honor of the day and where red cloths decorated the walls. The foremen at my lumber camp were also invited.

For once one was able to eat sufficiently, for on that occasion the kolkhoz put on a big feast, slaughtered a calf and, in addition, baked extra bread. On the other hand, the cost of the vodka was deducted from one's wages, and the impact was strongly felt on the payday that followed. The government-fixed price of vodka was 114 rubles per liter and that of the 96 percent alcohol 240 rubles. To the management, however, the price was only 5.40 rubles, in other words, just slightly more than the cost of production. Vodka is to the Russian what [akavavit] corn brandy [aqua vite] is to the Swede. It was difficult to get hold of vodka during the war years and up to the spring of 1947, but thereafter a sudden change in the production of alcohol followed. When I returned home in the summer of 1947, production had just about caught up with consumer demand. One could buy vodka in all the stores, and in the cafes and restaurants in the cities, everyone who could afford it would down a half or a full stakan -- 100 and 200 grams of vodka, respectively.

Vodka also plays an important propaganda role when the rulers wish to incite the people to fulfill their work standards more rapidly than they had previously done. On such occasions one of the party elite usually visits and makes a speech about the five-year-plan and urges everyone to produce more and more, and if the standards are met in record time there will be vodka in store. Then the spirits are awakened and every man makes new efforts in order to get half a liter or perhaps more of the coveted beverage.

On the whole, the Communist Party's leaders seem unable to conceive of any other reward than a little vodka, and even at the political elections it has great significance.

Anna Petrovna was in her glory. She would be able to dance and drink vodka -- in her opinion life's two great causes for rejoicing. She came into my room before the party and showed herself in all her splendor. She was undeniably rather stylish, tall and powerful, with lively shining eyes. She coquetted with a red scarf over her black hair; she wore boots, and skirt and blouse which she herself had sewn. The party was of the usual type; after a few hours all present had had time to imbibe so much vodka that they were crawling on the floor.

Anna Petrovna alone kept dancing and dancing, until she went home with the head of the lumber camp. He had a wife and children, but he was not a very strict believer in marital fidelity. On the whole, marriage was not in vogue. The majority lived together without being married, that is to say, without having registered with the recorder in Yarensk.

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if she had a child without being married, for she would then be placed in the same category as war widows and receive a family subsidy every month. Furthermore, as long as the children were small she would escape conscription into forestry or lumber work. The more children she had, the greater was the service she did the State, and she might in due time receive one of "Little Father Stalin's" special-merit medals, with Stalin's picture and an engraved catchword on the back. In the Soviet Union mothers of three or four children receive a bonus, of four or more children a monthly subsidy in addition to the regular family subsidy, of five or six children the motherhood medal, of seven to nine children the Motherhood-honor order, and of ten or more children the title and order of "Mat' Geroina," the heroine mother.

The day following the festivities in memory of the revolution, everyone naturally felt tired and reluctant to work. Furthermore, it would be an eternity until one got another opportunity for such diversion. The grey everyday life resumed, long, gloomy and devoid of causes for rejoicing. But one could always hope that someone would be able to afford to buy a liter of vodka.

TOPICS OF CONVERSATION AND INTERESTS

About what do the Russians think? About what does one talk? What is the attitude toward America? Does one believe that a third world war will break out? Such questions have constantly been put to me since I returned home, and these, primarily, are the questions which I shall attempt to answer. As I pointed out earlier, however, it is difficult to obtain a reliable reaction when one feels the pulse

of the Russian people, especially on political questions. Their deep-rooted suspiciousness of all persons, especially of foreigners, of course, make the Russians exceedingly unwilling to allow anyone to get to close quarters with them. During the rather long period I worked in Russian production, nevertheless, I obtained a fairly good insight into the mental attitudes of my comrades, particularly whenever I succeeded in engaging someone in a private conversation. Needless to say, I do not claim that my observations apply to the entire Russian people, but I believe that I managed rather well to sound the state of mind of the vocational categories with which I became acquainted, the forestry, lumber and kolkhoz workers in Northeastern Russia. I believe I may even venture to say that my position as observer in Russia of today was rather unique in that I lived as one of the people with a not unduly restricted freedom of movement. During the latter part of my stay in the kolkhoz, furthermore, I was no longer considered as a foreigner. I had so completely melted into the daily life that no one directly reflected on the fact that I did not belong there.

In the beginning, of course, I was also asked many questions about conditions in my native country, especially by the younger people who saw in me an opportunity to broaden somewhat their narrow horizon. The first question put to me was always: "Are there any Communists in Sweden?" When I told about our various political parties, they believed that I was exaggerating. Opposition parties were something they simply could not understand. They could not conceive of any system but the one under which there has to be one party in sole control. When I described our Swedish standard of living they were also convinced that I was a lying propagandist and smiled indulgently at my tale. They would then often switch to

talking about their great, wonderful country, of which they were all immoderately proud, even the older kolkhoz members, whose permanent discontentment only concerned the system. Furthermore, they all agreed on one point: there is no army in the world as powerful and successful as the Red Army and no soldiers as valiant and as tenacious as the Russian. The most valiant of them all were, of course, the generals, about whom even people in this little forest village knew. The youths lavished a genuine idol-worship on them. The generals of the Red Army are to Russia approximately what the motion picture stars are to the Western countries. On the other hand, it was extremely seldom that I heard Stalin being talked about, except at the propaganda meetings during the October festivities. The homecoming soldiers, too, were somewhat the objects of that generals-cult, and in Russia one never tires of listening to the stories of their experiences; but then, muster is the greatest event in the life of a Russian boy. To become a soldier in the "Glorious Red Army" is everyone's ardent desire. Songs glorifying the soldier's life have also crowded out the old folksongs, which one almost never hears anymore. But when someone strikes up a military song, eyes shine with an ecstatic glow.

All this worship of the generals and this giving prominence to the country's absolute superiority over other countries, and the insistence that all countries outside the Russian sphere are capitalist states and consequently have a lower standard of living than the Russian plus, moreover, hard and inhuman living conditions for the working people, all this is the fruit of far-pushed and skillfully managed propaganda which in our eyes rather seems ridiculous and childish but which in reality has been very effective. And why should it not have been effective? After all, the Russian leaders, with the Communist Party as their greatest instrument of power, possess all the means, they control the schools, the radio, the literature and the press. They even make it impossible for Russian citizens to travel, for instance, as tourists to any capitalist country, Finland, Sweden, Norway or any other country. This Russian propaganda machine makes unprecedented efforts to cover up the country's shortage of various goods, to convince the Russians that they are the world's happiest people and that they are extremely well off in comparison to the peoples of the capitalistic countries. Still they have not entirely succeeded in preventing some doubt from stealing in among the people. I am thinking primarily of all the homecoming soldiers who were present when the Red Army marched into Germany and the Balkan countries. I met several of them and they told many things. No one talked about the Nazi system, of which most of them moreover seemed to have a dim conception. On the other hand, they related with a certain wonder that almost everything from the toilets to women's underwear was more luxurious than they had ever seen before. Apparently, in Germany the super-highways and

the small suburbs of villa-residences had appealed to them. The fact that electricity and water conduits were everywhere to be found also aroused their surprise, for they were not accustomed to anything of the sort in their native country. In the areas of Russia in which I stayed electric powerplants were extremely uncommon. On the kolkhoz we had to rely entirely on petroleum lamps, and one was forced to watch every drop, for the allotment amounted to 1 to 1-1/2 liters per month. Undoubtedly this rather large class of people, as well as the considerable groups who in the occupied countries deserted from the Red Army and whose line of conduct one can fully understand, got a widened outlook.

In order to counteract this budding satisfaction among the soldiers who returned home and encountered nothing save want, misery, hard work and privations at home, the Soviet regime has done everything to convince the people that their own supply of consumer goods is rapidly increasing and that, if they will only be patient a little while longer, there will be an abundance of goods for everyone. The newspaper always contained eye-catching articles about the increased production of shoes, food items, clothes, furniture etc., and about the fact that statistics showed continued daily increase of production in accordance with the five-year plan.

In the Russian countryside, small communities and smaller sized towns there exists no entertainment. To be sure, in the larger places a cinema performance might now and then be put on, a travelling theatre group might perhaps visit the place and give one or a few performances, a dance might be arranged in connection

with some national festival day, but all the same such things occur spasmodically and with long intervals in between. On some evenings the youths gather in a barrack, the beds are moved aside, and they have themselves a spin, but as a rule life is nothing but an everyday grey monotony. Nor are there any clubs like ours in which to participate, which are either of a non-utilitarian or non-trade union type. I shall return to the trade union movement a little later.

Obviously, under such conditions, our important evening pastime consisted of playing cards, sitting around talking or listening to someone who knew how to tell stories about his life as a soldier, for example. If I attempted to start a conversation on politics when we were gathered this way, I always ran into a stone wall, created as much by ignorance as by suspiciousness. As regards politics, the large mass of the Russian people are like a blank paper. They have no idea of what goes on in outside world, nor do they have an opportunity to procure any such knowledge, at least not reliable knowledge -- the "unidirection" has taken care of that. Newspapers are in demand as paper for rolling cigarettes; everyone is an eager smoker and the small boys take up the habit at a very early age. This indifference to newspaper-reading has many causes, to be sure. There were many among the older people who simply could not read; many could scarcely write their name. Russian newspapers also have a different mission to fill than ours. In Russia newspapers do not constitute an agent for the dissemination of news items. Robberies, murders, traffic accidents, etc., are not printed. On the other hand, one often encounters in

the columns notices of higher military or civilian appointments; articles on Marxist theory, reports from various agricultural districts on the delivery of the quantities of food stipulated by the State, notices about the appropriate times for the starting of the spring sowing or for taking care of the fall harvests -- matters which in themselves should be obvious to every farmer. All speeches by Stalin and his closest men are, of course, published. Only the last page (all Russian newspapers have just four pages) is dedicated to foreign news, with partiality shown such cables as those which deal with strikes, unemployment, racial persecutions, etc. Needless to say, such news items are at the same time pointed out as showing the differences compared with conditions in the mighty and free Soviet Union.

These newspapers appear in limited issues and not every one who wants them (for reading or smoking) has the possibility of getting hold of them. In our lumber camp only three people received a newspaper although the majority subscribed; the reason offered was the shortage of paper. In Moscow the newspapers are sold in certain stands but are usually sold out in a matter of minutes.

However, a certain amount of speculation attached to this situation. When sold in the official stands, each copy cost 20 kopeks. After they were sold out one could obtain newspapers in the free market or from small boys everywhere on street corners, but then they commanded a price of 3 rubles, regardless of whether they were recent or old.

In spite of the great mass ignorance regarding political events, I clearly noticed a gradually hardening attitude toward America, and everyone, of course, was clear about the fact that purely capitalistic interests dictated England's and The United States' participation in the war. I never heard anyone pronounce a good word about the allies' contributions in the war. Everyone was absolutely convinced that the "Glorious Red Army" alone could claim credit for Germany's collapse. Likewise, one asserted that it was Russia that had forced Japan down on her knees. All this the well-lubricated propaganda machine, the press, the radio and the party's lecturers had stuffed into the Russian population even since the cessation of hostilities, in smaller or larger portions, and the peoples' reasoning indicated that it had taken effect.

If the Russians did not harbor any sympathy for their former brother-allies in war, they did, on the other hand, generally admire their high technical standard, and it happened now and then that Pravda published photographs of American aircraft and tanks. As a rule, however, an addendum would appear to the effect that the Soviet Union was carrying on the construction of models which would far surpass these American models. Mention was never made of the atomic bomb. It did not seem as though the population had any knowledge of it. One did not talk about it, and, while I was in Russia, I never saw any article in Pravda or any other newspaper which dealt with atom bomb experiments.

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... There used to be special bulletin boards in the cities and larger settlements, on which the most recent copy of Pravda or

Isvestiya was pinned and where the population could read, if it wished to do so. It was at one such bulletin board in Yarensk that I met one of the more outspoken Russians I ran into during my stay in Russia. It was at the end of January of 1947 on the occasion of the celebration of the memory of Lenin's death. The city was decorated with large portraits of Lenin and all the bulletin boards contained pictures depicting various episodes in Lenin's life. I had come into town to discharge my obligation to report to the police and on the way back had stopped by a bulletin board to study the pictures when an old woman came walking up the street. She stopped, and for a long moment stood and looked thoughtfully at the pictures, and then she said: "Well, if that man had been allowed to live, we surely would have escaped all this misery."

She was not alone to hold that opinion. It often emerged during the conversations I had with the friends I eventually made. They put the blame for their difficult life primarily on the final shape given by Stalin to his predecessor's ideas. The kolkhoz people first and foremost criticized that which lay closest to their hearts - - the bloody enforcement of collectivization in 1931-32. They also spoke with bitter sarcasm of the constantly recurring propaganda of the party officials seeking to increase production and realize the five-year plan in less time than stipulated.

WE REACH AN AGREEMENT WITH OUR EMPLOYER

The same situation applied to us in the lumber camp. Before the spring season began, the highest chief of the lumber district came to us and gave an inflammatory speech about how important it was that everyone put his shoulder to the wheel and make further effort in order that the five-year plan should work out. Everything depended on this five-year plan, for if everything went as planned the workers would attain a much higher living-standard in the near future. He concluded his speech by reading the work agreement, to apply during the coming work period, between the workers and the employer, the State. In this agreement, drawn up at a higher level, a norm was stipulated which had to be met 100 percent in order for us to complete the lumber floating by a set date. In addition, the agreement contained a "technical norm" approximately 10 to 15 percent higher and which the flating chief pointed out we would have to do our best to attain, partly because the country required it and partly because our reputation as good floating workers demanded it. He explained that the five-year plan, which included projects for production increases in all

branches of industry, had been planned so as to be completed in a shorter time, for instance four years. Now, there were certain districts, according to his information, which required wood products for their construction projects in order to be able to fulfill their commitments, wood products which we must force through to the sawmills and pulp factories in order that these in turn might deliver the finished products in accordance with the program. The entire plan might be upset if we did not do our utmost. The Novaya Irtovsk lumber camp, some 100 kilometers farther up the Vychegda river and of approximately the same size as Zapadnaya Yarenga, had challenged our camp to a contest as to which would be first to fulfill its production plan, and it would be a great shame if we were beaten. In order further to stimulate us to increased efforts we were promised that, if the "technical norm" were attained, we would receive a certain number of packs of cigarettes each month and, in addition, that on each payday 96 percent alcohol would be given to each according to his performance of work.

After the speech and the account of the work agreement, the assembled workers were asked whether anyone had any objections as regarded the agreement, but everyone remained silent, well aware of the fact that criticism would entail great risks. The agreement having thus been approved, three representatives for the workers had to sign the documents, and we were in possession of a new work agreement, an agreement which presented a great many duties to the workers but gave exceedingly little in way of compensation, an agreement which offered alcohol and cigarettes when the workers needed food and clothes, which demanded work in 12 hour shifts during the best part of the year, the summer, when one could more than well have done with greater leisure time. However, everything must be sacrificed

for the good of the State, as the saying went. The readers will possibly interrupt me at this point with the remark that surely there must exist trade unions whose primary objective should be to protect the interests of the members and that, especially when agreements are involved, negotiations between the parties must take place and serve as basis for the agreements. Yes, according to our concepts these things are obvious, but that is not the way matters stand in Russia.

TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION

At first during the years immediately following the revolution the Russian trade unions possessed features corresponding closely with those of the Western countries. Worker councils were created in the various enterprises, councils which were to attend to the various problems presenting themselves in the enterprises. These worker councils exerted a great influence. Among other things, when labor management had to be appointed, the approval of the worker council was essential. The right to strike existed and was even exercised in certain cases. During the ensuing development the mission of the trade unions completely changed. The trade union more and more became a tool directly subordinated to the State. Today there is one-man management in the factories and enterprises. The manager alone decides, for instance, about the dismissal of a worker or his transfer to some other enterprise. The wages and work norms are determined at the higher level and without negotiations with the workers. One can easily say that the character and position of the Russian trade unions of today have undergone such great changes that the unions possess neither freedom nor independence.

All questions of principle touching upon the activity of the trade unions are decided by the politburo among whose members there is not one trade union representative, not even Kuznetsov, head of the Russian Trade Union Federation sits in the Politburo. According to the statutes, the congress of the trade unions of the Soviet Union must convene every three years, but between the years 1932 and 1949 no meeting took place. In other words, for seventeen

years there was nothing of importance with which to deal! The Russian worker has no possibility of improving his position as a worker through the intermediary the trade union. He cannot obtain higher pay because the total sum of expenditures for each industry or enterprise is narrowly fixed in the plan which applies to the entire country. Furthermore, trade unions are not permitted to organize a fight for higher wages, for, in accordance with the government decree of 17 February 1947 concerning collective agreements, these may not contain any stipulation for wage increases. Their main object is to guarantee the fulfillment and surpassing of the production plan of the State within the work area in question. Furthermore, the Soviet's present trade unions are not based on collective benefits, they do not raise strike-funds and they do not have any genuine negotiation committees. The strike fund, for that matter, would be altogether without mission in the Russia of today. In the communist conception, only the enemies of the Soviet Union could possibly come upon as criminal an idea as to strike, and they would surely land in concentration camp for actions of sabotage against the production plan.

The Russian trade union movement of today does not have as its aim the fight for higher wages; rather, its primary task is to push the workers to increased and improved work, and, according to the regulations; one of the responsibilities of the trade union is to participate in the planning and execution of "socialist competition" between the workers and the various industrial enterprises within the districts in order to obtain a higher yield. It is quite

natural that the production interests benefit thereby, but the average worker's strength is subjected to abnormal strain, and those workers who are handicapped by a weaker physique suffer directly. Through their immediate connection with the government machinery the trade unions have had to assume certain government functions, among others the management of social insurance. From a disciplinary point of view this arrangement implies many advantages. If a worker proves himself somewhat unwilling to submit to sacrifices which, for instance, might be demanded in order that the production plan be realized within the stipulated time period, he runs a good chance of encountering difficulties in connection with his social insurance or other bonuses. And if he has once been looked upon as a "trouble-maker" he will run into difficulties, no matter in which enterprise he lands, for his workbook always accompanies him. He will find it hard to obtain work, especially skilled work, without a workbook. Nor can one consider membership in a trade union as voluntary. One only receives half of the support to which one is entitled in case of illness unless one is a member of the trade union. The same situation applies in the event of accident; the provisions applicable to lumber workers who were victims of accidents entitled a member to 50 percent of his regular earnings while a nonmember was entitled to only 25 percent. For this reason, all workers are forced to join the trade union, but this is not done in the voluntary manner to which we are accustomed.

At the Zapadnaya Yarenga lumber camp the trade union membership among the workers was practically 100 percent, and we also had a council direction consisting of three members. Two of them

were shift bosses, and the third, captain of one of the lumber transports. During the period I was there (from 9 April 1946 until 15 June 1947 the trade union did not once convene, except when the top floating-manager came each spring to deliver his customary speech about increased production, and when, too, the agreement was read and approved. On those occasions the Council members ran about summoning the workers to meeting, to which it was our duty and responsibility to attend. We were not permitted to be absent. If one failed to come, one was fetched and most certainly kept in mind as regards future work assignments. Our "confidence men" were also the ones who signed the agreement and who often during the summer reminded us of our responsibilities in accordance with the agreement, that we must not despair if some workdays were particularly strenuous and tiresome.

AN ELECTION VICTORY

I was present at the very interesting elections for the "Verkhovniy Soviet" (the Soviet parliament, the Supreme Soviet), Russia is divided into electoral districts, approximately as here at home, with several voting places in each district. The newspapers print the photographs and pertinent biographies of the candidates. All candidates are decided upon beforehand by the various levels of the Communist Party. Most of the candidates are Communists, but a few non-party candidates are also put up, mainly for propaganda purposes. These non-party candidates are Communist followers, appearing as an alleged "block of Communists and non-party persons." These pre-chosen candidates of the Communist Party are then nominated by the assembly, always on a unanimous basis. The voters, terrorized for the past thirty years, do not dare suggest an opposition candidate, and they lack every type of political organization, inasmuch as, since 1921, only the Communist Party has been allowed. Thanks to the fact that the voters are divided into a large number of small voting districts, with designated voting places, it is easy to survey all the voters and even to fetch the negligent from their residences. Everyone who has reached the age of 18 is required to vote and practically everyone does participate, for one would otherwise rightly be looked upon as politically suspect if one failed to vote, and failure to vote is recorded in the vote register.

As regards the lumber-camp and the Pervoye Maya Kolkhoz, the conduct of the elections followed the customary ritual. Upon the completion of the voting, a dance ensued and 100 grams of vodka

were passed out to each voter. The "election victory" would be celebrated in accordance with tradition. The following days the newspapers contained long accounts of the elections and statements such as: "Once more the free will of the Russian people has turned the scale in Russia's future politics. The wise leader Stalin and his party obtained an overwhelming majority in the elections of the year." "This year's elections a convincing victory for the Communist party. The Russian people once more shows its respect and affection for the father and teacher Stalin." "Participation in this year's election practically 100 percent."

I never noticed that anyone read these articles with any great interest, nor did I ever hear the elections being commented upon. Under these conditions, universal suffrage in the Soviet Union is not the right to vote as we conceive it, but rather it is an obligation to vote: without freedom of choice, without opposition and without opposition candidates. The unfree Soviet elections are in reality but the semblance of elections, a demonstration for the Soviet government organised by the Communist party.

There was frequent mention of a third world war, which everyone counted on as a not-too-distant reality. And during the latter part of my stay in Russia many incidents occurred which pointed in that direction. Toward the end of 1946, for instance, almost every day the newspapers contained accounts to the effect that every kolhoz had made 100 percent delivery on the orders of the State, while at the same time the food rations were reduced. Even on the free market the supply of goods decreased. "The State is storing food", everyone was saying, and no one entertained any doubt as to the reason for the State's storing. Furthermore, children and youths began being

impressed into the industries and military schools to an even greater extent than before.

This brings us to a subject about which, at least outside Russia's borders, practically nothing has been known. The first decree for the mobilization of children by conscription was issued in October of 1940. This is not a creation of the war, for this mobilization started before the outbreak of the war and has been carried on to a much wider extent since the end of the war than ever occurred during the war years. These children do not have the privilege of choosing an occupation themselves, but are incorporated into whatever industry is in greatest need of them. It concerns children and youths in the ages between 12 and 17. They are first put through vocational training, including studies and physical education along methods which aim at making them obedient and fanatical servants for the entire Soviet State. After the training period they are assigned to those industries which have an urgent need of labor-power, and they work there under contracts drawn up for a specified period of time. Consequently, they do not have the right to terminate their employment if they should wish for such reason as unsatisfactory pay or because they do not feel at home in their position. Through conscription some of the youths are assigned to military schools where they train to become future officers in the army in the same manner as the others are educated for their proletarian future. As regards those youths who are picked out for the military schools, there is, in a way, no coercion, inasmuch as the greatest desire of most of them is to become a soldier in the "Glorious Red Army". These children will some day constitute a new type of proletariat. Saturated with Communistic ideology and Stalinistic theories, they will turn into

persons completely devoid of the slightest conception of individual freedom, blind instruments of the State. What this will imply is easy to imagine.

There were two men from the Pervoye Maya Kolkhoz who worked at Chelyabinsk, the tractor plant in the Urals. When they were home on leave they related that work in the Ural plants was carried on 24 hours a day in two 12-hour shifts, and there was no secret about the fact that the production of tanks far surpassed the manufacture of tractors. People in general were in favor of armaments for a new war, in spite of the fact that most of them were weary of war. However, I never heard anyone speculate as to who the attacker would be. On the other hand, many among those to whom I talked were far from convinced that Russia would come out of it the victorious power. Everyone knew that the population was being strongly bled, and everyone was especially aware of America's fantastic technical resources. The belief in the Red Army with "the world's best and most courageous soldiers", however, remained strong, and the young were particularly certain that they would carry home the victory no matter which country attacked.

I mentioned earlier that only approximately 3 percent of Russia's population belong to the Communist Party. Now, what is the reason for this? As a background it is no doubt necessary to view Russia as the large country it is, with a population of close to 200 million people, made up of a great number of different races and nationalities. One must even consider the difficulties the Russians have experienced through wars and revolutions during the last half-century, their suspiciousness (constituting almost an illness) against the western states and of the existing or imagined opposition within their own borders and, further, the old doctrine about

the revolutionary elite of Communism. It is for these reasons that the Communist leadership strives for a strictly disciplined, absolutely subservient and semi militarily directed party. In order to become such, however, the party can not be too large. The Communist Party, indeed, does possess the real power. Its role is stipulated even in the Soviet State's constitutional law, for according to article 126 in the Soviet constitution, the party is described as the "leading core all organizations of the working people, both public and state."

The party is strongly centralised, with the Politburo, the Orgburo and the Secretariat as directing bodies. Here is where the entire Union's internal and external politics are determined, where, furthermore, the management of the party's tremendous apparatus is performed. It is natural that such a well-disciplined organization should have its strong points. It can act as rapidly and as secretly as a well-trained army without having to waste time on debates or compromises. It attracts to its fold the most skillful and most ambitious elements, for the only way to power and a career in the Russia of today is through the party, and for this reason the Red membership-card is greatly coveted. It serves as a passport in that world where Russia's new upper-class, the party functionaries and officials and others of equal standing, lead an existence which from the point of view of the workers, is a comfortable existence. The highest posts in industrial life, management and the army, as well as the leading positions in the cultural and scientific spheres, may be assigned only to party members. It is exceedingly difficult to gain admission into the party, almost impossible for the common worker who has no high standing connections. To be sure, the privilege to seek admission into the party belongs to everyone, everyone who believes

himself to possess the right ability, strength and devotion to "the great cause". The weeding out, however, is exceedingly severe, and one is almost tempted to use as comparison the image of the camel and the eye of the needle.

The applicatn first has to do a kind of trial service, one may call it a period of recruit training, inasmuch as the main purpose is to study thoroughly the "holy books", the writings of Marx, Lenin and Engel, in which the applicant must be genuinely at home in order to be able to perform active work in the service of communism. Upon the expiration of the trial period the applicant must obtain the recommendation of three older members, and if he is then proved to have a spotless past and to have correctly interpreted his prophets, he wins the approval of the party direction and has great possibilities of advancement if he plays his cards right. No one should believe, however, that the gate is thrown open to any simple worker who knocks. The sons and daughters of officials find it much easier to slip through. Anyone who, for instance, has shown a friendly attitude toward religion would exert himself in vain.

Through the limitation of the party's numbers the great majority of the population lose their possibilities of influencing the policies followed in Russia. The party holds all the power and authority in its hand and has been converted into a stratum isolated from the large mass of the people.

Religion constitutes another interesting question in the Russia of today. We are all familiar with the bloody persecutions of the

adherents of the Orthodox Church during the first phase of Communism. We have been told of how the priests and monks were ex-patriated or arrested and sent to prison camps, how the churches were converted into motion-picture theaters, grain storehouses, smithies or repair shops, and yet a certain degree of religiousness has survived all the persecutions. It is especially noticeable in the country side among the older population. Once more the icon stands in its old place today, and the elders often make the sign of the cross before it. The churches have also been reopened for services in some larger communities, but large sections of the countryside still remain without places in which the religious citizenry may gather. Just what is it which has brought about this reversed stand on religion? Even during the World War II one noticed a tapering off of the anti-religion propaganda, and nowadays the Communist party and the Orthodox Church have even come to a reconciliation or rather entered into a semblance of marriage.

The church has actually proved to be a valuable weapon in the politics of the Soviet Union, especially in its foreign policy concerned as it is with gaining increased influence in the Balkan countries, an area where religion still plays an important role. The church and the priesthood in Russia, however, stand under the party's strict control and do not have the possibility of asserting themselves against the party, nor will they ever get this possibility as long as all the instruments for molding opinion, such as the radio, the press, the theater and literature, are also closely directed from the same source. The church can thus accomplish nothing in the struggle over the growing generation.

It is among the older people that one finds many illiterates. One is definitely forced to enter the organization of the educational system on the credit side of Communism's ledger. Four years of elementary school are now obligatory, but the student has the right to continue an additional three years free of charge. Where higher education is concerned, however, the children of the upper-class are better off, inasmuch as a fee, and a rather high fee, was imposed on all education beyond these seven years. The result is that it is difficult for workers' children to go on studying. In the early stages of the Communist regime all education was free of charge, but Stalin later announced that, in view of the worker's higher standard of living, higher education would be subject to charge, and that this would lighten the burden on the State. The education is emphatically propaganda-colored and the students are constantly fed ideas about their belonging to a chosen people, a people with a "special quality." They must, of course, also learn that the Communist party is the only right and conceivable party. Much space in the history books of the schools is devoted to the old wars against Sweden during the era of Charles XII. The contributions of the Russian people are naturally greatly glorified and in this connection motion pictures have also been resorted to as educational material.

The Russian propaganda-press here in Sweden is very keen on bragging about the great intellectual interest in the Soviet Union, about the thirst for reading, and the ample selection of books by domestic and foreign authors. However, I did not find much evidence of this interest while I was in Russia, at least not in the countryside. There, a book collection constituted a rarity, and the books one did find were, as a rule, by national authors and dated back to

the period before the revolution. If one visits a bookstore in a city or larger community one encounters almost exclusively literature about the history of Communism, books about Lenin and Stalin, about the five-year plan and its program, etc. One item of which there is an abundance is large portraits, on thick paper, of the Soviet Union's great men -- with Stalin, the members of the Politburo and the generals heading the list. The portraits cost 18 rubles apiece and unquestionably constitute the best-selling article in the bookstores.

THE CLASSLESS SOCIETY

Do class distinctions exist in Russia's "classless society"? One is compelled to answer yes to that question if one uses the western definition of class distinction, that is, a divergence in living standards, education and a person's position in society, generally speaking.

When the Russians or the Communists state that there is no class distinction, they mean that no individual person owns or controls soil, forests, machines or other means of production which can be employed to exploit other persons. Even this type of argument loses validity when examined a bit closer. The Russian Communist Party comprises a certain elite, welded together, which possesses the customary characteristics of a ruling class. Furthermore, it even controls all means of production and enjoys all the advantages of reputation and higher standard of living which distinguish a ruling class. Beyond that, one can ask oneself wherein lies the difference between the case where a privately-owned enter-

prise exploits a group of people and the case where the State manages to do it, when the worker still does not share in the profits which are created but merely gets his pay.

The wage system in itself constitutes clear evidence that class distinction exists in Russia. In his day, Lenin vigorously emphasized: "The entire society must be one single civil service department, one single factory with all work on a par and equality of wages." How has this developed? In present-day Russia the good salaries go to the higher officials, officers, technicians of all types, scientific men, doctors, and party functionaries. All these persons enjoy salaries which are sky-high above those of the workers. Great differences reign even among the workers. A stakhanovite, a worker who has performed unusually good work thanks to physical qualifications or for other reasons, can, through bonuses, reach a level of income which is ten times higher than that of the average worker. In addition to these higher earnings, there is the matter of the more generous allotments of food. There are even special stores for functionaries, which carry items which otherwise are not to be found even on the free market. A common worker does not have access to these stores. His ration cards are issued for purchases in one specified store and are not valid in any other.

Like the question of food distribution, clothing, too, presents evidence of class distinction in the Soviet Union. The best clothed persons are NKVD officials and Red Army officers. They all wear well-fitting uniforms and not infrequently full-length leather coats as outer garments in the winter, while the workers move about in their padded trousers and coats, warm, to be sure, but far from becoming. It is a simple matter to distinguish by their dress the different classes in any gathering of people in present-day Russia.

Even the education (higher education) shows signs of obvious class distinction by virtue of the fact that, as mentioned, it is subject to charges. There the scale tips heavily in favor of today's upper-class, and an examination certificate from a university or technical institution becomes more and more essential if one wishes to advance in the higher professions or official positions.

Even where railway trips or visits to motion-picture or theatre performances are concerned, the higher officials enjoy priority. The motion-picture theatres would begin selling tickets to the evening's performance at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and queues would always form, but officers and higher officials merely had to go directly to the ticket window and buy their tickets without having to stand in line.

Since my return home, many people have asked me whether an iron curtain does exist and, if so, why, and how it works. That an iron curtain does exist is a certainty and, to some extent, explicable. It is obvious that if the Russian population had possibilities of freely travelling abroad, they soon would discover

that one of the Soviet regime's most-used propaganda themes is not valid. It has always been pointed out from higher sources how the workers in the so-called capitalistic states (Sweden included) lack all freedom, are driven to hard work, have to live under repulsive conditions and have a standard of living which lies far, far below the Soviet standard of living. (I refer you to the statements made in the Hungarian press in connection with the return home of the Hungarian farmers after their sojourn in Sweden.) Such Russian tourists would find the further sacrifices required of the Russian population by the new production plans difficult to understand. If an extensive tourist traffic develop, these conditions would in all likelihood become known throughout Russia and the population would react in a manner which might produce difficult and far-reaching consequences for the present regime. The same condition would develop if people from other countries were permitted to travel as they thought best anywhere in Russia and to study the prevailing conditions. The myth about the free and happy Soviet paradise would then soon be unmasked and the Communist parties in the various countries robbed of one of their most important propaganda platforms.

Then what are the prevailing conditions? Well, Soviet citizens are not allowed to travel outside the borders of the Soviets except on official missions. Whoever attempts to leave the country without permission meets with severe punishment, which not only strikes him but his nearest of kin and everyone who has possessed knowledge of his intention, as well. To obtain permission to enter Russia is just as difficult. If one calls at a passport office to seek a visa, one is advised that he can count on at least a

six-month wait before obtaining it. If one intends to travel as an ordinary individual tourist, one does not stand a chance of obtaining a visa.

It is rather natural that the average Russian's knowledge of foreign countries and foreign peoples is limited, not to say nonexistent. I had the opportunity myself to observe this fact. I was often asked to tell about how things were in Sweden. The young people, especially, were very eager to learn and, like other youth, probably dreamed of an opportunity to get out and to take a look around the world. Yet, at the same time, they knew that this was beyond the realm of possibility, and the majority also seemed to have reconciled themselves on this point. You see, merely to undertake a short trip inside the country met with great difficulties, partly because of the unsatisfactory transport facilities, partly because most of them did not have the permission to leave their village. For example, there were many in the lumber camp who had to request permission to go to the adjacent town of Yarensk.

The only ones who were able to travel more or less freely were the party functionaries, and even those among them in less elevated positions encountered difficulties in getting out and moving about. For this reason they earnestly appreciated being picked out for some training course somewhere else. The rationing system presented another obstacle to those who were desirous of travelling, for the cards were valid only in one place, the place where one was registered, and to rely entirely upon the possibilities of the black market was something which far exceeded the meager means of the Russian people.

However, even if the Russians have no possibilities for taking a trip abroad, excellent opportunities for contacts with foreigners of all nationalities do exist within their own country -- the many con-

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centration camp prisoners who have been released from camp but still go about and wait in vain for the chance to return home. The propaganda about "people of special quality" has penetrated fertile soil, however, for in many places I noticed a well-developed contempt for foreigners. Standing lowest in esteem were the Chinese, who were hardly considered as people; they were also assigned the worst jobs in the enterprises. The Finns, too, were very much disliked, and if a Russian wished to use particularly foul language against someone, he would often say "that Finn". Most despised of all, however, were of course the Germans. After all, Germany had during the war more than qualified itself as the most hated nation. Everyone was very well acquainted with the wild pillaging of the Germans, for films of the villages and cities they had reduced to ruins were shown in the smallest settlement.

The Russian people's attitude toward concentration camps is also an interesting chapter. Everyone was exceedingly aware of their existence. If one had not been in one oneself, one always had a relative or acquaintance who had. But one felt ashamed over this. The fright of being sent to one, however, ^{weighed} ~~weighed~~ heavily on everyone, and whenever someone became particularly outspoken in his criticism his friends used to quiet him down by making the "camp sign" -- forming a square with their fingers, which was supposed to represent a prison cell. The discontented one would always become silent. During my first days as a free man in Russia, it seemed to me that I noticed a sort of freemasonry among former camp prisoners, for whenever anyone observed my short-cut hair and then tried to help me as far as he was able, it never failed that the person with whom I was

dealing had himself been in camp.

People were especially afraid of being sent to the dreaded Pechera camp on the barren tundra up in the northernmost section of the Urals. There the barracks are dug down in the ground, the food even worse than in other camps and the work exceedingly strenuous. There are mainly Chinese prisoners up there. Many have long since expiated their punishment, but still are not permitted to leave Russia. There were prisoners who, like myself, had been deported to the Lenski area, but the difference was that they had to remain there for thirty years before they got a chance to move to another place. I ran into them both in camp and in the town of Yarensk, and I became just as dispirited each time I heard their gloomy prophecy: "We'll never get away from here." For, after all, I went about each day myself hoping that I would be permitted to return home.

BACK TO SWEDEN

I was fully aware of the fact that I would have to proceed carefully and diplomatically if I were to have a chance to return home to Sweden. I had to arm myself with great patience. The very day I left the concentration camp I began pondering over the possibilities of getting into contact with the Swedish legation in Moscow. In May 1946, a friend helped me write them a letter. Of course, I was not at all certain that the letter would reach its destination, and I wrote very carefully, simply explaining who I was and asking them to get word to my parents that I was alive and that things were "allright".

Thereafter I went about during that whole summer in a state of expectancy and at the end of October I obtained a reply. I was informed that the letter had been forwarded to my parents, who had managed to reply. I immediately began feeling less isolated. After all, the Swedes in Moscow now knew that there was a fellow-countryman up there in Northern Russia. I was convinced that they would understand the implication of my letter and that I would obtain the help I needed. My hopes did not prove ungrounded. I now ventured to write a more detailed letter, in which I related my position and inquired how I might be able to return home to Sweden.

A good month passed, and then I again received a letter, with an application form for a Swedish passport. As soon as I was free one day I went to Yarensk and had a photograph taken. The photographer was a Chinese who was in the same situation as I. He had obtained a passport from his country but still could not leave Rus-

sia, for the Russians would not grant him a permit to leave. His requests simply met with an unexplained refusal. He believed that the same thing would happen to me, but I did not allow myself to become downhearted. I was convinced that I would manage to get out of Russia.

One day at the end of February I received a registered letter. It contained my Swedish passport, issued in Moscow -- actually a very unique document, which later was to make the Swedish passport inspectors doubt their own literacy. I constantly carried the little black book with its gold print on my person and it gave me a wonderful feeling of security. The most difficult part still remained, however -- to obtain a permit to leave from the Russian authorities.

In the beginning things looked dark, for first I had to secure my manager's permission to leave, and he refused on the grounds that although to be sure, my work contract had expired, we had now entered the busiest season for floating lumber and the good of the State took priority over my personal welfare. I pointed out that I was not a Russian citizen and that I would get in touch with the Swedish legation. If diplomatic negotiations had to be resorted to, it would be too bad for him, if he refused to let me go. This argument proved effective with him, and I received from him written permission to terminate my employment. Then I sent my papers to the NKVD headquarters in Arkhangel'sk, which was primarily responsible for handling such matters. On 15 July 1947 the foreman called me into his office. He was rather sour-sweet as he told me that the passport bureau in Yarensk had

called and had asked me to report there, but he let me go without making any trouble. I had walked the stretch between the lumber camp and Yarensk many times, but never with a lighter heart than on this brilliant day in the height of summer. I realized that I now had put the greatest difficulties behind me.

At the passport bureau the officials conducted themselves politely and properly, and I could not help making a silent comparison between my previous visits to this office and this one. This time everyone treated me as though I were a high official. I also overheard several of them express the opinion that I must be someone of great importance in Sweden, since the legation had done everything to help me with my return trip home; had I been only a common worker, the Swedish authorities would surely not have cared a fig about where I happened to be. My papers were already in order, the visa had been issued, and all that was missing was a stamp on my passport. An official stamped it and handed me my papers without further explanations, and now, formally, at least all obstacles to my departure from Russia had been removed.

I returned to the lumber camp, claimed the wages still owed to me and said goodbye to my comrades. They were all sincerely happy for me, they wished me luck on my trip when, on the morning of 17 July, I went in to Yarensk to board the river-boat for Kotlas. My travel companions were mostly party functionaries, who were on their way either to a training course or a meeting, and of course there was a large number of military personnel.

The day I left Yarensk by river-steamer enroute to Kotlas -- the first stage of my return trip to Sweden -- was a

beautiful day in the height of summer. The steamers plying the Vychegda River were side-wheelers, being equipped with two large paddle wheels, one on either side. They travelled fairly fast, especially downstream, and they were very silent.

There were many people on board, especially military personnel but also numerous civilians. The few berths on board were occupied by officers and various officials travelling on special assignments. Every bit of the deck was occupied by soldiers and by lumber and farmworkers who were headed for their various places of work farther down the river. The boat called at all the larger places along the river and at every pier we were met by kolkhoz women selling their products to the travellers. Milk was the item most readily sold but even eggs at the price of 5 rubles each and poorly ripened bilberries and strawberries at 3 rubles per stakan (100 grams) found a ready market. The boat also carried a number of non-paying passengers, mostly children 10 to 12 years old, who at every stop sneaked aboard and hid themselves behind the woodpiles or the sacks of merchandise; many were discovered and put ashore, but a number managed to stay aboard for at least a few stops. They would constantly come out of hiding whenever anyone was about to eat. They would swarm around him and beg for food. They made a pitiful impression, these little half-wild children, ragged and hungry as they were. They were not infrequently orphans and had none to care for them. They were reduced to drifting from place to place, trying to stay alive by begging and stealing.

The journey continued all night and not until about ten o'clock on 18 July did we reach Kotlas. I was to purchase a ticket for the Moscow train here, and therefore I immediately started for the railway station. The train was to leave around one o'clock in the afternoon, but all tickets were already sold out when I arrived, and there was nothing to do but to wait until

the following day.

Two trains were to leave in the direction of Moscow, one via Vologda, the best route, and the other via Kirov and Gorkiy, the more troublesome route with numerous changes of trains. The ticket window opened at 8 o'clock, but at five o'clock I was already at the station. First I went to the travel office to obtain a permit to purchase the ticket. Everyone travelling by railway had to account for his journey, telling where he was going, the reason, how long he intended to be gone, and through which places his trip would take him, before he was permitted to purchase a ticket. If his trip was considered justified, he was issued a permit and could then call at the ticket window.

At seven o'clock the queue began to form. The procedure followed here consisted of placing at the head of the line those who already had tickets (those whose trip had started elsewhere and who had to change trains here). They had to have their tickets stamped and obtain a car-number ticket. Following them in the line were the "komandirovki", those who were on their way to training programs and meetings or were being sent on some special mission by the party. The Ordianovki were the next group in line. This group consisted of those who during the war had received a special order and along with it a red book, a kind of premium. Last in line came those who had no special mission, the ordinary workers.

When only a few trains were scheduled to leave and there was a shortage of space, the tickets were usually sold out before

half the queue had been taken care of. On such occasions there was nothing left to do but wait until the following day and hope for better luck.

I was placed among the komandirovki in the line and was given permission to go by way of Vologda, but I was still a good distance from the ticket window when the tickets were sold out. I then pushed my way without regard for the others to the other line (for the trip via Kirov and Gorkiy) paying no attention to everyone's shouts of anger, and I actually succeeded in getting a ticket to Moscow. To be sure, this route would be longer and I would have to change trains, but at least I had my ticket. The ticket, which included a reserved seat, cost 107 rubles. The first stop was Kirov, but I would have to have my ticket restamped before that. Everything came off fairly well, although there was not much space to spare for the restamping had to be done on the train. I stood in the corridor, meditating over the course of the trip, calm so far, when suddenly the train stopped with a violent jerk. A gruesome atmosphere of anxiety quickly spread through the cars. The NKVD was coming, and all papers would have to be examined. A chill swept over me; what if my papers were not absolutely in order, what if I were arrested now and my trip home miscarried, now that I was so close to the goal! I heard the police coming closer and closer, and a wild discussion broke out farther down in the car; then the door to my compartment was pushed open. A powerful, dark-complexioned man in NKVD uniform stepped inside. He slowly walked from passenger to passenger, carefully examining their papers. I sat

there with my Swedish passport and Russian permit to leave and my hands were damp from nervousness when I stretched out the bundle of papers. The NKVD man glanced superficially at the permit to leave, turned the passport over, read carefully, thanked me, and then walked out and conferred with his companions. Everyone in the compartment looked at me and a feeling of anxiety crawled all over my body; if I were stopped now, my plan to return home would be frustrated. I heard the police talking vehemently in the corridor; then the first NKVD man returned to the compartment. He asked a few questions, wanted to know whether I was Swedish, how I had obtained my passport, and where I was going. Finally, he returned my passport to me, saluted, and left the train. I sank into my corner and did not dare to breathe in relief for a long, long while.

In Gorkiy there was another change of trains, and I had to wait there all day before getting my ticket restamped. Two trains a day covered the Gorkiy-Moscow route in both directions. These were usually express trains, and the chance of getting aboard them was quite small. Hundreds of persons who had camped in the station, merely waiting to get on the train. Many of them had been there over a week without managing to obtain space on any train. Nevertheless, I managed that evening to push my way aboard an extra train, which had been put on to take care of the numerous waiting travelers.

Around eleven o'clock on the morning of 22 July we arrived in Moscow, that matchless metropolis, of which everyone spoke with veneration and admiration. I fear that I was not particularly

interested in the city just then. In my pocket I carried a piece of paper bearing the address of the Swedish legation, and I could think of nothing but getting there as soon as possible.

I stopped outside the station area somewhat irresolute as to which direction to take to get to the legation. As I stood there, deliberating, a man came up to me and asked whether I knew my way around in Moscow, telling me that if I did not and if I needed a guide, he would be willing to accompany me. I told him where I wanted to go, and he offered to take me there for 30 rubles. The price was outrageous (two days' earnings), but I did not bother to haggle about it. I had but one thought: to reach the legation as soon as possible.

After half an hour's journey on street cars and buses, we reached our destination. My guide did not wish to accompany me all the way to the gate, since he was afraid of the police, who maintained a patrol outside the legation. It was not advisable to show oneself in the company of foreigners, he explained. I covered the last block to the legation building alone. I could not miss it, for cars with Swedish streamers were parked outside it. Only now did I feel perfectly calm, but at the same time a feeling of great weariness came over me, for now came the reaction from the railway trip and the NKVD raids.

AT LAST

I entered the legation, and the first thing I saw in the hall was the Swedish flag, draped around the Swedish national coat of arms. The emotion I experienced at that moment is difficult to describe, but I am not ashamed to say that I found it difficult to hold back the tears. A Russian porter approached me and asked me what I wished. I asked to speak to one of the legation personnel. A man came out, and now -- for the first time in four years -- I heard my native tongue spoken: "How do you do, I understand that you are Rudfalk."

This was the Secretary of the legation, Akerren, who became my first contact with Sweden. I encountered difficulties in uttering a Swedish word, I had to think carefully before my lips managed to form the words. I was given the very best treatment. I was permitted to bathe and eat, received cigarettes and Swedish newspapers, and was given a private room to sleep in. I had to pinch myself in the arm to convince myself that I was not dreaming.

On that same day, the legation called Intourist to inquire as to whether or not a flight ticket to Sweden could be obtained. It turned out that I would have to wait until Monday 28 July, and thus I got an opportunity to take a closer look at Moscow. I walked along wide streets in the center of the city, lined with new houses, only, but I also strolled about in the tumble-down areas off the main streets. I rode the extraordinarily well-organized subway. I tried out worn-out streetcars and somewhat better trolley-busses. I seldom saw a bicycle and almost never a

private car which did not belong to one of the various legations or a party official. Around me were the miserably dressed working population and gaudily bedecked officers. In one corner lay a soldier with amputated legs, begging. Everywhere I ran into swarms of ragged and begging children. One evening I went to the magnificent opera house and saw "Madame Butterfly". The audience consisted almost exclusively of officers and their families. I felt like a sparrow among peacocks as I sat there in the first orchestra stalls in my work-worn clothes, together with bemedaled high officers and society people. I had obtained the ticket through the legation. Everyday I undertook excursions, now to this and now to that section of town. The legation's gardener often served as my guide, but just as often I made my excursions alone, although the legation personnel had warned me against staying in town too much; it was unwise, they said, to take too great risks, now that my return home was so close. One time during my excursions, I was stopped by a policeman and ordered to show my papers, but when he discovered that I lived at the Swedish legation and that my papers were in order, he begged my pardon and saluted me.

My short week in Moscow passed quickly, and Monday, the day of my departure for home, came soon. On Sunday evening I said goodbye to everyone at the legation, and at three o'clock Monday morning the legation car took me out to the airport, situated a good distance outside Moscow.

At four o'clock the plane took off and I settled back comfortably in my seat and simply enjoyed the trip. I have never felt so relieved as the moment when the plane took off from Moscow. We landed in Leningrad for customs and passport inspection, but the bus which was to take us to the NKVD passport control office had had a blow-out, and we had to wait in the plane. It was a long wait but finally, when the crew had completely lost patience, the passport inspectors came out to us and examined our papers and belongings. In my case, the process was short, for I was not encumbered by any luggage and I was traveling just as I had lived in Russia -- in a discarded soldier's uniform and boots. From Leningrad the journey continued directly to Helsinki. The Russian pilot flew low, and we enjoyed a good view of the landscape below us. From the plane it was easy to notice the moment when we left the Russian landscape behind us and found ourselves flying over Finnish territory. Up to that time grey had been the predominant color in the Russian landscape. Most of the houses in the villages and settlements are unpainted and only an occasional house is daubed with a grey-white lime paint which, however does not make it stand out in the grey, forbidding picture. Once one is over Finnish territory, however, a bright and colorful picture opens up before him. The houses are painted red and white, with tile roofs which clearly and distinctly light up as one glides forward. Here, however, one also sees other things. Wide

areas, blackened by fire, with clearly discernible crater holes here and there, the unhealed wounds of war, extend over the Karelian Isthmus.

In Helsinki we had a few hours' stop, and then our course was set for Stockholm in a Swedish plane. As I sat there, comfortably settled down, and the Swedish air-hostess served tea and sandwiches and chewing-gum, I thought I had left all troubles and complications behind me, but I proved to be wrong. Even at the passport inspection at Bromma airport matters became complicated. And I could understand the attitude of the officials. Here was an individual in a discarded Russian uniform and wearing a moustache; he was carrying a Swedish passport, to be sure, but a passport issued in Moscow. They had never before seen anything like this, and there were no provisions in the regulations for such a situation. To convince them that the passport was genuine required much time and power of persuasion. Then a police scout-car was sent for me. It seemed to me that I could have been given a more agreeable reception on native soil, but the passport inspector had examined the detention list, which contained the names of all those who had not done their military service, and my name appeared on it. There was nothing to do but to ride along to police headquarters in Kungsholmen.

When I had been called for regular muster I had been released, but at a later muster in 1942, I had been assigned to the air corps. At that time I was employed in war industry and therefore exempted from military service. During the period between the time that I terminated that employment and the time that I began my journey to Russia, I had not received any notice for military service. I found

out later that approximately three months after my departure, a call-up order had been sent to me, and in this manner I had landed on the detention list. After accounting for my whereabouts I had to remove all my belonging from my pockets and relinquish everything, including my belt and once more I made the acquaintance of a cell. I was again beginning to count on the possibility of a stay in prison and did not feel particularly cheerful. Fortunately, my detention did not last very long this time. An officer from the detective bureau came for me; he offered me coffee, and we sat and talked while telegrams were exchanged between the police and the air corps wing in Ostersund. At a quarter to none in the evening I was advised that I would be released, and I arrived at the Central Railroad Station in time to catch the northbound train.

It was morning when I arrived at Hallviken, a glorious summer day. At the station I saw two friends of mine, two men who were employed on the railway. I went up to them, but they just stared surprised at the man in Russian uniform.

"Don't you recognize me?" I asked.

"Yes," they replied, "aren't you Ragnar? Where have you been?"

"In Russia."

"In Russia? Good God, then you must have been through hell!"

I then borrowed a bicycle and traveled the ten-kilometer distance home to Grenaskalen. More than four years had passed since I had last gone there on bicycle. I stopped frequently and sat by the side of the road and simply enjoyed the sunny day and the familiar surroundings. I enjoyed being able to do as I pleased, as a free

person, with no reason to feel fear or uncertainty any more. I rode on, up the last slopes, around the last bend, and there I saw the village before me, the dearest of all places, the village of which I had dreamed during all these years of imprisonment and which I had given up hope of ever seeing again. I rode the last few meters up to the side road and slowly walked up the hill to my home. The whole family was sitting in the kitchen having dinner. I opened the door and stepped in. Mother rose, and her fork fell clattering onto the plate!

"Ragnar," she cried, "Ragnar, you have come home at last, you have come home..."

[Biographical note inside back cover]

RAGNAR

RUDFALK

[Author's photograph]

I WORKED

IN THE SOVIET

Ragnar Rudolfalk is the name of a young man from Norrland, who is presently employed in the Norrbotten Iron Works at Lulea. In 1943 he secretly left Sweden, together with a Norwegian friend, with the intention of making his way to England, via Finland and Murmansk, and joining the free Norwegian forces there. He was seized in Russia, on suspicion of espionage, and he spent nearly three years in various prison camps in northern Russia, of which he gives frightening glimpses. The most interesting chapters, however, are those in which he depicts his experiences as a free worker in Russia. For a period of one year he worked as a log-floater and had abundant opportunities for a thorough study of the Russian rural population. His description of the Russian people's every day life, their work, their leisure-time occupations, their sources of grief and sorrow is unique in its kind. This is the first time we have been given such a documentary description of Russian labor-contract negotiations, of the work of the Russian trade unions, of Russian labor competitions, and the Russian "people's court". The entire book is an ingenuous document, frank and straight to the point, a moving description of reality.

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